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English Men of Letters

EDITED BY JOHN MORLEY

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POPE

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POPE

By LESLIE STEPHEN

JOHNSON

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AND NEW YORK

1895



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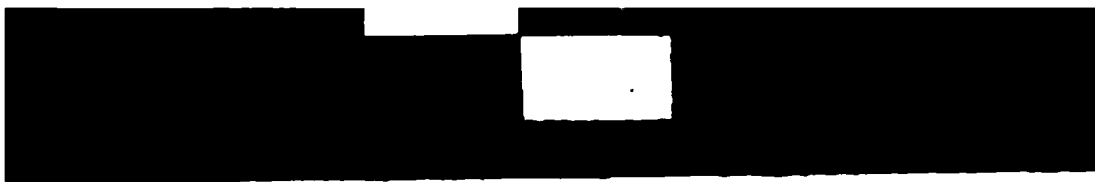
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English Men of Letters

EDITED BY JOHN MORLEY

P O P E







ALEXANDER POPE

BY
LESLIE STEPHEN

London
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PREFATORY NOTE.

THE life and writings of Pope have been discussed in a literature more voluminous than that which exists in the case of almost any other English man of letters. No biographer, however, has produced a definitive or exhaustive work. It seems therefore desirable to indicate the main authorities upon which such a biographer would have to rely, and which have been consulted for the purpose of the following necessarily brief and imperfect sketch.

The first life of Pope was a catchpenny book, by William Ayre, published in 1745, and remarkable chiefly as giving the first version of some demonstrably erroneous statements, unfortunately adopted by later writers. In 1751, Warburton, as Pope's literary executor, published the authoritative edition of the poet's works, with notes containing some biographical matter. In 1769 appeared a life by Owen Ruffhead, who wrote under Warburton's inspiration. This is a dull and meagre performance, and much of it is devoted to an attack—partly written by Warburton himself—upon the criticisms advanced in the first volume of Joseph Warton's *Essay on Pope*. Warton's first volume was published in 1756; and it seems that the dread of Warburton's wrath counted for something in the delay of the second volume, which did not appear till 1782. The *Essay* contains a good many anecdotes of interest. Warton's edition of Pope—the notes in which are chiefly drawn from the *Essay*—was published in 1797. The *Life* by Johnson appeared in 1781; it is

admirable in many ways; but Johnson had taken the least possible trouble in ascertaining facts. Both Warton and Johnson had before them the manuscript collections of Joseph Spence, who had known Pope personally during the last twenty years of his life, and wanted nothing but literary ability to have become an efficient Boswell. Spence's anecdotes, which were not published till 1820, give the best obtainable information upon many points, especially in regard to Pope's childhood. This ends the list of biographers who were in any sense contemporary with Pope. Their statements must be checked and supplemented by the poet's own letters, and innumerable references to him in the literature of the time. In 1806 appeared the edition of Pope by Bowles, with a life prefixed. Bowles expressed an unfavourable opinion of many points in Pope's character, and some remarks by Campbell, in his specimens of English poets, led to a controversy (1819—1826) in which Bowles defended his views against Campbell, Byron, Roscoe, and others, and which incidentally cleared up some disputed questions. Roscoe, the author of the *Life of Leo X.*, published his edition of Pope in 1824. A life is contained in the first volume, but it is a feeble performance; and the notes, many of them directed against Bowles, are of little value. A more complete biography was published by R. Carruthers (with an edition of the works), in 1854. The second, and much improved, edition appeared in 1857, and is still the most convenient life of Pope, though Mr. Carruthers was not fully acquainted with the last results of some recent investigations, which have thrown a new light upon the poet's career.

The writer who took the lead in these inquiries was the late Mr. Dilke. Mr. Dilke published the results of his investigations (which were partly guided by the discovery of a previously unpublished correspondence between Pope and his friend Caryll), in the *Athenæum* and *Notes and Queries*, at various intervals, from 1854 to 1860. His contributions to the subject have been collated in the first volume of the *Papers of a Critic*,

edited by his grandson, the present Sir Charles W. Dilke, in 1875. Meanwhile Mr. Croker had been making an extensive collection of materials for an exhaustive edition of Pope's works, in which he was to be assisted by Mr. Peter Cunningham. After Croker's death these materials were submitted by Mr. Murray to Mr. Whitwell Elwin, whose own researches have greatly extended our knowledge, and who had also the advantage of Mr. Dilke's advice. Mr. Elwin began, in 1871, the publication of the long-promised edition. It was to have occupied ten volumes—five of poems and five of correspondence, the latter of which was to include a very large proportion of previously unpublished matter. Unfortunately for all students of English literature, only two volumes of poetry and three of correspondence have appeared. The notes and prefaces, however, contain a vast amount of information, which clears up many previously disputed points in the poet's career; and it is to be hoped that the materials collected for the remaining volumes will not be ultimately lost. It is easy to dispute some of Mr. Elwin's critical opinions, but it would be impossible to speak too highly of the value of his investigations of facts. Without a study of his work, no adequate knowledge of Pope is attainable.

The ideal biographer of Pope, if he ever appears, must be endowed with the qualities of an acute critic and a patient antiquarian; and it would take years of labour to work out all the minute problems connected with the subject. All that I can profess to have done is to have given a short summary of the obvious facts, and of the main conclusions established by the evidence given at length in the writings of Mr. Dilke and Mr. Elwin. I have added such criticisms as seemed desirable in a work of this kind, and I must beg pardon by anticipation if I have fallen into inaccuracies in relating a story so full of pitfalls for the unwary.

L. S.

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POPE.

CHAPTER I.

EARLY YEARS.

THE father of Alexander Pope was a London merchant, a devout Catholic, and not improbably a convert to Catholicism. His mother was one of seventeen children of William Turner, of York ; one of her sisters was the wife of Cooper, the well-known portrait-painter. Mrs. Cooper was the poet's godmother ; she died when he was five years old, leaving to her sister, Mrs. Pope, a "grinding-stone and muller," and their mother's "picture in limning ;" and to her nephew, the little Alexander, all her "books, pictures, and medals set in gold or otherwise."

In after-life the poet made some progress in acquiring the art of painting ; and the bequest suggests the possibility that the precocious child had already given some indications of artistic taste. Affectionate eyes were certainly on the watch for any symptoms of developing talent. Pope was born on May 21st, 1688—the *annus mirabilis* which introduced a new political era in England, and was fatal to the hopes of ardent Catholics. About the same

time, partly, perhaps, in consequence of the catastrophe, Pope's father retired from business, and settled at Binfield—a village two miles from Wokingham and nine from Windsor. It is near Bracknell, one of Shelley's brief perching places, and in such a region as poets might love, if poetic praises of rustic seclusion are to be taken seriously. To the east were the "forests and green retreats" of Windsor, and the wild heaths of Bagshot, Chobham and Aldershot stretched for miles to the South. Some twelve miles off in that direction, one may remark, lay Moor Park, where the sturdy pedestrian, Swift, was living with Sir W. Temple during great part of Pope's childhood; but it does not appear that his walks ever took him to Pope's neighbourhood, nor did he see, till some years later, the lad with whom he was to form one of the most famous of literary friendships. The little household was presumably a very quiet one, and remained fixed at Binfield for twenty-seven years, till the son had grown to manhood and celebrity. From the earliest period he seems to have been a domestic idol. He was not an only child, for he had a half-sister by his father's side, who must have been considerably older than himself, as her mother died nine years before the poet's birth. But he was the only child of his mother, and his parents concentrated upon him an affection which he returned with touching ardour and persistence. They were both forty-six in the year of his birth. He inherited headaches from his mother, and a crooked figure from his father. A nurse who shared their care, lived with him for many years, and was buried by him, with an affectionate epitaph, in 1725. The family tradition represents him as a sweet-tempered child, and says that he was called the "little nightingale," from the beauty of his voice. As the

sickly, solitary, and precocious infant of elderly parents, we may guess that he was not a little spoilt, if only in the technical sense.

The religion of the family made their seclusion from the world the more rigid, and by consequence must have strengthened their mutual adhesiveness. Catholics were then harassed by a legislation which would be condemned by any modern standard as intolerably tyrannical. Whatever apology may be urged for the legislators on the score of contemporary prejudices or special circumstances, their best excuse is that their laws were rather intended to satisfy constituents, and to supply a potential means of defence, than to be carried into actual execution. It does not appear that the Popes had to fear any active molestation in the quiet observance of their religious duties. Yet a Catholic was not only a member of a hated minority, regarded by the rest of his countrymen as representing the evil principle in politics and religion, but was rigorously excluded from a public career, and from every position of honour or authority. In times of excitement the severer laws might be put in force. The public exercise of the Catholic religion was forbidden, and to be a Catholic was to be predisposed to the various Jacobite intrigues which still had many chances in their favour. When the pretender was expected in 1744, a proclamation, to which Pope thought it decent to pay obedience, forbade the appearance of Catholics within ten miles of London ; and in 1730 we find him making interest on behalf of a nephew, who had been prevented from becoming an attorney because the judges were rigidly enforcing the oaths of supremacy and allegiance.

Catholics had to pay double taxes and were prohibited from acquiring real property. The elder Pope, according

to a certainly inaccurate story, had a conscientious objection to investing his money in the funds of a Protestant government, and, therefore, having converted his capital into coin, put it in a strong-box, and took it out as he wanted it. The old merchant was not quite so helpless, for we know that he had investments in the French *rentes*, besides other sources of income; but the story probably reflects the fact that his religious disqualifications hampered even his financial position.

Pope's character was affected in many ways by the fact of his belonging to a sect thus harassed and restrained. Persecution, like bodily infirmity, has an ambiguous influence. If it sometimes generates in its victims a heroic hatred of oppression, it sometimes predisposes them to the use of the weapons of intrigue and falsehood, by which the weak evade the tyranny of the strong. If under that discipline Pope learnt to love toleration, he was not untouched by the more demoralizing influences of a life passed in an atmosphere of incessant plotting and evasion. A more direct consequence was his exclusion from the ordinary schools. The spirit of the rickety lad might have been broken by the rough training of Eton or Westminster in those days; as, on the other hand, he might have profited by acquiring a livelier perception of the meaning of that virtue of fair-play, the appreciation of which is held to be a set-off against the brutalizing influences of our system of public education. As it was, Pope was condemned to a desultory education. He picked up some rudiments of learning from the family priest; he was sent to a school at Twyford, where he is said to have got into trouble for writing a lampoon upon his master; he went for short time to another in London, where he gave a π

credible if less characteristic proof of his poetical precocity. Like other lads of genius, he put together a kind of play—a combination, it seems, of the speeches in Ogilby's *Iliad*—and got it acted by his schoolfellows. These brief snatches of schooling, however, counted for little. Pope settled at home at the early age of twelve, and plunged into the delights of miscellaneous reading with the ardour of precocious talent. He read so eagerly that his feeble constitution threatened to break down, and when about seventeen, he despaired of recovery, and wrote a farewell to his friends. One of them, an Abbé Southcote, applied for advice to the celebrated Dr. Radcliffe, who judiciously prescribed idleness and exercise. Pope soon recovered, and, it is pleasant to add, showed his gratitude long afterwards by obtaining for Southcote, through Sir Robert Walpole, a desirable piece of French preferment. Self-guided studies have their advantages, as Pope himself observed, but they do not lead a youth through the dry places of literature, or stimulate him to severe intellectual training. Pope seems to have made some hasty raids into philosophy and theology; he dipped into Locke, and found him "insipid;" he went through a collection of the controversial literature of the reign of James II, which seems to have constituted the paternal library, and was alternately Protestant and Catholic, according to the last book which he had read. But it was upon poetry and pure literature that he flung himself with a genuine appetite. He learnt languages to get at the story, unless a translation offered an easier path, and followed wherever fancy led "like a boy gathering flowers in the fields and woods."

It is needless to say that he never became a scholar in the strict sense of the term. Voltaire declared that he

could hardly read or speak a word of French ; and his knowledge of Greek would have satisfied Bentley as little as his French satisfied Voltaire. Yet he must have been fairly conversant with the best known French literature of the time, and he could probably stumble through Homer with the help of a crib and a guess at the general meaning. He says himself that at this early period, he went through all the best critics ; all the French, English and Latin poems of any name ; "Homer and some of the greater Greek poets in the original," and Tasso and Ariosto in translations.

Pope at any rate acquired a wide knowledge of English poetry. Waller, Spenser, and Dryden were, he says, his great favourites in the order named, till he was twelve. Like so many other poets, he took, infinite delight in the *Faery Queen* ; but Dryden, the great poetical luminary of his own day, naturally exercised a predominant influence upon his mind. He declared that he had learnt versification wholly from Dryden's works, and always mentioned his name with reverence. Many scattered remarks reported by Spence, and the still more conclusive evidence of frequent appropriation, show him to have been familiar with the poetry of the preceding century, and with much that had gone out of fashion in his time, to a degree in which he was probably excelled by none of his successors, with the exception of Gray. Like Gray he contemplated at one time the history of English poetry which was in some sense executed by Warton. It is characteristic, too, that he early showed a critical spirit. From a boy, he says, he could distinguish between sweetness and softness of numbers, Dryden exemplifying softness and Waller sweetness ; and the remark, whatever its value, shows that he had been

analysing his impressions and reflecting upon the technical secrets of his art.

Such study naturally suggests the trembling aspiration, "I, too, am a poet." Pope adopts with apparent sincerity the Ovidian phrase,

As yet a child, nor yet a fool to fame
I lisp'd in numbers, for the numbers came.

His father corrected his early performances and when not satisfied, sent him back with the phrase, "These are not good rhymes." He translated any passages that struck him in his reading, excited by the examples of Ogilby's Homer and Sandys' Ovid. His boyish ambition prompted him before he was fifteen to attempt an epic poem ; the subject was Alcander, Prince of Rhodes, driven from his home by Deucalion, father of Minos ; and the work was modestly intended to emulate in different passages the beauties of Milton, Cowley, Spenser, Statius, Homer, Virgil, Ovid, and Claudian. Four books of this poem survived for a long time, for Pope had a more than parental fondness for all the children of his brain, and always had an eye to possible reproduction. Scraps from this early epic were worked into the *Essay on Criticism* and the *Dunciad*. This couplet, for example, from the last work comes straight, we are told, from Alcander,—

As man's Mæanders to the vital spring
Roll all their tides, then back their circles bring.

Another couplet, preserved by Spence, will give a sufficient taste of its quality :—

Shields, helms, and swords all jangle as they hang,
And sound formidinous with angry clang.

After this we shall hardly censure Atterbury for approving (perhaps suggesting) its destruction in later years. Pope long meditated another epic, relating the foundation

of the English government by Brutus of Troy, with a superabundant display of didactic morality and religion. Happily this dreary conception, though it occupied much thought, never came to the birth.

The time soon came when these tentative flights were to be superseded by more serious efforts. Pope's ambition was directed into the same channel by his innate propensities and by the accidents of his position. No man ever displayed a more exclusive devotion to literature, or was more tremblingly sensitive to the charm of literary glory. His zeal was never distracted by any rival emotion. Almost from his cradle to his grave his eye was fixed unremittingly upon the sole purpose of his life. The whole energies of his mind were absorbed in the struggle to place his name as high as possible in that temple of fame, which he painted after Chaucer in one of his early poems. External conditions pointed to letters as the sole path to eminence, but it was precisely the path for which he had admirable qualifications. The sickly son of the Popish tradesman was cut off from the bar, the senate, and the church. Physically contemptible, politically ostracized, and in a humble social position, he could yet win this dazzling prize and force his way with his pen to the highest pinnacle of contemporary fame. Without adventitious favour and in spite of many bitter antipathies, he was to become the acknowledged head of English literature, and the welcome companion of all the most eminent men of his time. Though he could not foresee his career from the start, he worked as vigorously as if the goal had already been in sight; and each successive victory in the field of letters was realized the more keenly from his sense of the disadvantages in face of which it had been won. In tracing his rapid ascent,

we shall certainly find reason to doubt his proud assertion,—

That, if he pleased, he pleased by manly ways,

but it is impossible for any lover of literature to grudge admiration to this singular triumph of pure intellect over external disadvantages, and the still more depressing influences of incessant physical suffering.

Pope had indeed certain special advantages which he was not slow in turning to account. In one respect even his religion helped him to emerge into fame. There was naturally a certain free-masonry amongst the Catholics allied by fellow-feeling under the general antipathy. The relations between Pope and his co-religionists exercised a material influence upon his later life. Within a few miles of Binfield lived the Blounts of Mapledurham, a fine old Elizabethan mansion on the banks of the Thames, near Reading, which had been held by a royalist Blount in the civil war against a parliamentary assault. It was a more interesting circumstance to Pope that Mr. Lister Blount, the then representative of the family, had two fair daughters, Teresa and Martha, of about the poet's age. Another of Pope's Catholic acquaintances was John Caryll, of West Grinstead in Sussex, nephew of a Caryll who had been the representative of James II. at the Court of Rome, and who, following his master into exile, received the honours of a titular peerage and held office in the melancholy court of the Pretender. In such circles Pope might have been expected to imbibe a Jacobite and Catholic horror of Whigs and freethinkers. In fact, however, he belonged from his youth to the followers of Galho, and seems to have paid to religious duties just as

much attention as would satisfy his parents. His mind was really given to literature; and he found his earliest patron in his immediate neighbourhood. This was Sir W. Trumbull, who had retired to his native village of Easthampstead in 1697, after being ambassador at the Porte under James II., and Secretary of State under William III. Sir William made acquaintance with the Popes, praised the father's artichokes, and was delighted with the precocious son. The old diplomatist and the young poet soon became fast friends, took constant rides together, and talked over classic and modern poetry. Pope made Trumbull acquainted with Milton's juvenile poems, and Trumbull encouraged Pope to follow in Milton's steps. He gave, it seems, the first suggestion to Pope that he should translate Homer; and he exhorted his young friend to preserve his health by flying from tavern company—*tanquam ex incendio*. Another early patron was William Walsh, a Worcestershire country gentleman of fortune and fashion, who condescended to dabble in poetry after the manner of Waller, and to write remonstrances upon Celia's cruelty, verses to his mistress against marriage, epigrams, and pastoral eclogues. He was better known, however, as a critic, and had been declared by Dryden to be, without flattery, the best in the nation. Pope received from him one piece of advice which has become famous. We had had great poets—so said the “knowing Walsh,” as Pope calls him—“but never one great poet that was correct;” and he accordingly recommended Pope to make correctness his great aim. The advice doubtless impressed the young man as the echo of his own convictions. Walsh died (1708), before the effect of his suggestion had become fully perceptible.

The acquaintance with Walsh was due to Wycherley, who had submitted Pope's Pastorals to his recognized critical authority. Pope's intercourse with Wycherley and another early friend, Henry Cromwell, had a more important bearing upon his early career. He kept up a correspondence with each of these friends, whilst he was still passing through his probationary period; and the letters published long afterwards under singular circumstances to be hereafter related, give the fullest revelation of his character and position at this time. Both Wycherley and Cromwell were known to the Englefields of Whiteknights, near Reading, a Catholic family, in which Pope first made the acquaintance of Martha Blount, whose mother was a daughter of the old Mr. Englefield of the day. It was possibly, therefore, through this connexion that Pope owed his first introduction to the literary circles of London. Pope, already thirsting for literary fame, was delighted to form a connexion which must have been far from satisfactory to his indulgent parents, if they understood the character of his new associates.

Henry Cromwell, a remote cousin of the Protector, is known to other than minute investigators of contemporary literature by nothing except his friendship with Pope. He was nearly thirty years older than Pope, and though heir to an estate in the country, was at this time a gay, though rather elderly, man about town. Vague intimations are preserved of his personal appearance. Gay calls him "honest hatless Cromwell with red breeches;" and Johnson could learn about him the single fact that he used to ride a-hunting in a tie-wig. The interpretation of these outward signs may not be very obvious to modern readers; but it is plain from other indications that he was

one of the frequenters of coffee-houses, aimed at being something of a rake and a wit, was on speaking terms with Dryden, and familiar with the smaller celebrities of literature, a regular attendant at theatres, a friend of actresses, and able to present himself in fashionable circles and devote complimentary verses to the reigning beauties at the Bath. When he studied the *Spectator* he might recognize some of his features reflected in the portrait of Will Honeycomb. Pope was proud enough for the moment at being taken by the hand by this elderly buck, though, as Pope himself rose in the literary scale and could estimate literary reputations more accurately, he became, it would seem, a little ashamed of his early enthusiasm, and, at any rate, the friendship dropped. The letters which passed between the pair during four or five years down to the end of 1711, show Pope in his earliest manhood. They are characteristic of that period of development in which a youth of literary genius takes literary fame in the most desperately serious sense. Pope is evidently putting his best foot forward, and never for a moment forgets that he is a young author writing to a recognized critic—except, indeed, when he takes the airs of an experienced rake. We might speak of the absurd affectation displayed in the letters, were it not that such affectation is the most genuine nature in a clever boy. Unluckily it became so ingrained in Pope as to survive his youthful follies. Pope complacently indulges in elaborate paradoxes and epigrams of the conventional epistolary style; he is painfully anxious to be alternately sparkling and playful; his head must be full of literature; he indulges in an elaborate criticism of Statius, and points out what a sudden fall that author makes at one place from extravagant bombast: he communicates the latest efforts of his muse,

and tries, one regrets to say, to get more credit for precocity and originality than fairly belongs to him, he accidentally alludes to his dog that he may bring in a translation from the *Odyssey*, quote Plutarch, and introduce an anecdote which he has heard from Trumbull about Charles I.; he elaborately discusses Cromwell's classical translations, adduces authorities, ventures to censure Mr. Rowe's amplifications of Lucan, and, in this respect, thinks that Brebœuf, the famous French translator, is equally a sinner, and writes a long letter as to the proper use of the *cæsura* and the hiatus in English verse. There are signs that the mutual criticisms became a little trying to the tempers of the correspondents. Pope seems to be inclined to ridicule Cromwell's pedantry, and when he affects satisfaction at learning that Cromwell has detected him in appropriating a *rondeau* from *Voiture*, we feel that the tension is becoming serious. Probably he found out that Cromwell was not only a bit of a prig, but a person not likely to reflect much glory upon his friends, and the correspondence came to an end, when Pope found a better market for his wares.

Pope speaks more than once in these letters of his country retirement, where he could enjoy the company of the muses, but where, on the other hand, he was forced to be grave and godly, instead of drunk and scandalous as he could be in town. The jolly hunting and drinking squires round Binfield thought him, he says, a well-disposed person, but unluckily disqualified for their rough modes of enjoyment by his sickly health. With them he has not been able to make one Latin quotation, but has learnt a song of Tom Durfey's, the sole representative of literature, it appears, at the "toping-tables" of these thick-witted fox-hunters. Pope naturally longed

for the more refined or at least more fashionable indulgences of London life. Beside the literary affectation, he sometimes adopts the more offensive affectation—unfortunately not peculiar to any period—of the youth who wishes to pass himself off as deep in the knowledge of the world. Pope, as may be here said once for all, could be at times grossly indecent; and in these letters there are passages offensive upon this score, though the offence is far graver when the same tendency appears, as it sometimes does, in his letters to women. There is no proof that Pope was ever licentious in practice. He was probably more temperate than most of his companions, and could be accused of fewer lapses from strict morality than, for example, the excellent but thoughtless Steele. For this there was the very good reason that his “little, tender, crazy carcass,” as Wycherley calls it, was utterly unfit for such excesses as his companions could practise with comparative impunity. He was bound under heavy penalties to be through life a valetudinarian, and such doses of wine as the respectable Addison used regularly to absorb, would have brought speedy punishment. Pope’s loose talk probably meant little enough in the way of actual vice, though, as I have already said, Trumbull saw reasons for friendly warning. But some of his writings are stained by pruriency and downright obscenity; whilst the same fault may be connected with a painful absence of that chivalrous feeling towards women which redeems Steele’s errors of conduct in our estimate of his character. Pope always takes a low, sometimes a brutal view of the relation between the sexes.

Enough, however, has been said upon this point. If Pope erred, he was certainly unfortunate in the objects of his youthful hero-worship. Cromwell seems to have been but a pedantic hanger-on of literary circles. His other

great friend, Wycherley, had stronger claims upon his respect, but certainly was not likely to raise his standard of delicacy. Wycherley was a relic of a past literary epoch. He was nearly fifty years older than Pope. His last play, the *Plain Dealer*, had been produced in 1677, eleven years before Pope's birth. The *Plain Dealer* and the *Country Wife*, his chief performances, are conspicuous amongst the comedies of the Restoration dramatists for sheer brutality. During Pope's boyhood he was an elderly rake about town, having squandered his intellectual as well as his pecuniary resources, but still scribbling bad verses and maxims on the model of Rochefoucauld. Pope had a very excusable, perhaps we may say creditable, enthusiasm for the acknowledged representatives of literary glory. Before he was twelve years old he had persuaded some one to take him to Will's, that he might have a sight of the venerable Dryden ; and in the first published letter¹ to Wycherley he refers to this brief glimpse, and warmly thanks Wycherley for some conversation about the elder poet. And thus, when he came to know Wycherley, he was enraptured with the honour. He followed the great man about, as he tells us, like a dog ; and, doubtless, received with profound respect the anecdotes of literary life which fell from the old gentleman's lips. Soon a correspondence began, in which Pope adopts a less jaunty air than that of his letters to Cromwell, but which is conducted on both sides in the laboured complimentary style which was not unnatural in the days when Congreve's comedy was taken to represent the conversation of fashionable life. Presently, however, the letters began to turn

¹ The letter is, unluckily, of doubtful authenticity ; but it represents Pope's probable sentiments.

upon an obviously dangerous topic. Pope was only seventeen when it occurred to his friend to turn him to account as a literary assistant. The lad had already shown considerable powers of versification, and was soon employing them in the revision of some of the numerous compositions which amused Wycherley's leisure. It would have required, one might have thought, less than Wycherley's experience to foresee the natural end of such an alliance. Pope, in fact, set to work with great vigour in his favourite occupation of correcting. He hacked and hewed right and left; omitted, compressed, rearranged, and occasionally inserted additions of his own devising. Wycherley's memory had been enfeebled by illness, and now played him strange tricks. He was in the habit of reading himself to sleep with Montaigne, Rochefoucauld, and Racine. Next morning he would, with entire unconsciousness, write down as his own the thoughts of his author, or repeat almost word for word some previous composition of his own. To remove such repetitions thoroughly would require a very free application of the knife, and Pope would not be slow to discover that he was wasting talents fit for original work in botching and tinkering a mass of rubbish.

Any man of ripe years would have predicted the obvious consequences; and, according to the ordinary story, those consequences followed. Pope became more plain-speaking, and at last almost insulting in his language. Wycherley ended by demanding the return of his manuscripts, in a letter showing his annoyance under a veil of civility; and Pope sent them back with a smart reply, recommending Wycherley to adopt a previous suggestion and turn his poetry into maxims after the manner of Rochefoucauld. The "old scribbler," says

Johnson, "was angry to see his pages defaced, and felt more pain from the criticism than content from the amendment of his faults." The story is told at length, and with his usual brilliance, by Macaulay, and has hitherto passed muster with all Pope's biographers, and, indeed, it is so natural a story, and is so far confirmed by other statements of Pope, that it seems a pity to spoil it. And yet it must be at least modified, for we have already reached one of those perplexities which force a biographer of Pope to be constantly looking to his footsteps. So numerous are the contradictions which surround almost every incident of the poet's career, that one is constantly in danger of stumbling into some pitfall, or bound to cross it in gingerly fashion on the stepping-stone of a cautious "perhaps." The letters which are the authority for this story have undergone a manipulation from Pope himself, under circumstances to be hereafter noticed; and recent researches have shown that a very false colouring has been put upon this as upon other passages. The nature of this strange perversion is a curious illustration of Pope's absorbing vanity.

Pope, in fact, was evidently ashamed of the attitude which he had not unnaturally adopted to his correspondent. The first man of letters of his day could not bear to reveal the full degree in which he had fawned upon the decayed dramatist, whose inferiority to himself was now plainly recognized. He altered the whole tone of the correspondence by omission, and still worse by addition. He did not publish a letter in which Wycherley gently remonstrates with his young admirer for excessive adulation, he omitted from his own letters the phrase which had provoked the remonstrance; and, with more daring falsification, he manufactured an imaginary letter

to Wycherley out of a letter really addressed to his friend Caryll. In this letter Pope had himself addressed to Caryll a remonstrance similar to that which he had received from Wycherley. When published as a letter to Wycherley, it gives the impression that Pope, at the age of seventeen, was already rejecting excessive compliments addressed to him by his experienced friend. By these audacious perversions of the truth, Pope is enabled to heighten his youthful independence, and to represent himself as already exhibiting a graceful superiority to the reception or the offering of incense ; whilst he thus precisely inverts the relation which really existed between himself and his correspondent.

The letters, again, when read with a due attention to dates, shows that Wycherley's proneness to take offence has at least been exaggerated. Pope's services to Wycherley were rendered on two separate occasions. The first set of poems were corrected during 1706 and 1707, and Wycherley, in speaking of this revision, far from showing symptoms of annoyance, speaks with gratitude of Pope's kindness, and returns the expressions of goodwill which accompanied his criticisms. Both these expressions, and Wycherley's acknowledgment of them, were omitted in Pope's publication. More than two years elapsed, when (in April, 1710) Wycherley submitted a new set of manuscripts to Pope's unflinching severity ; and it is from the letters which passed in regard to this last batch that the general impression as to the nature of the quarrel has been derived. But these letters, again, have been mutilated, and so mutilated as to increase the apparent tartness of the mutual retorts ; and it must therefore remain doubtful how far the coolness which ensued was really due to the cause assigned. Pope,

writing at the time to Cromwell, expresses his vexation at the difference, and professes himself unable to account for it, though he thinks that his corrections may have been the cause of the rupture. An alternative rumour,² it seems, accused Pope of having written some satirical verses upon his friend. To discover the rights and wrongs of the quarrel is now impossible, though, unfortunately, one thing is clear, namely, that Pope was guilty of grossly sacrificing truth in the interests of his own vanity. We may, indeed, assume, without much risk of error, that Pope had become too conscious of his own importance to find pleasure or pride in doctoring another man's verses. It must remain uncertain how far he showed this resentment to Wycherley openly, or gratified it by some covert means; and how far, again, he succeeded in calming Wycherley's susceptibility by his compliments, or aroused his wrath by more or less contemptuous treatment of his verses.

A year after the quarrel, Cromwell reported that Wycherley had again been speaking in friendly terms of Pope, and Pope expressed his pleasure with eagerness. He must, he said, be more agreeable to himself when agreeable to Wycherley, as the earth was brighter when the sun was less overcast. Wycherley, it may be remarked, took Pope's advice by turning some of his verses into prose maxims; and they seem to have been at last upon more or less friendly terms. The final scene of Wycherley's questionable career, some four years later, is given by Pope in a letter to his friend, Edward Blount. The old man, he says, joined the sacraments of marriage and extreme unction. By one he supposed himself to gain some advantage of his soul; by the other, he had the

² See Elwin's Pope, Vol. I., cxxxv.

pleasure of saddling his hated heir and nephew with the jointure of his widow. When dying, he begged his wife to grant him a last request, and, upon her consent, explained it to be that she would never again marry an old man. Sickness, says Pope in comment, often destroys wit and wisdom, but has seldom the power to remove humour. Wycherley's joke, replies a critic, is contemptible; and yet one feels that the death scene, with this strange mixture of cynicism, spite, and superstition, half redeemed by imperturbable good temper, would not be unworthy of a place in Wycherley's own school of comedy. One could wish that Pope had shown a little more perception of the tragic side of such a conclusion.

Pope was still almost a boy when he broke with Wycherley; but he was already beginning to attract attention, and within a surprisingly short time he was becoming known as one of the first writers of the day. I must now turn to the poems by which this reputation was gained, and the incidents connected with their publication. In Pope's life, almost more than in that of any other poet, the history of the author is the history of the man.

CHAPTER II.

FIRST PERIOD OF POPE'S LITERARY CAREER.

POPE's rupture with Wycherley took place in the summer of 1710, when Pope, therefore, was just twenty two. He was at this time only known as the contributor of some small poems to a Miscellany. Three years afterwards (1713) he was receiving such patronage in his great undertaking, the translation of Homer, as to prove conclusively that he was regarded by the leaders of literature as a poet of very high promise ; and two years later (1715) the appearance of the first volume of his translation entitled him to rank as the first poet of the day. So rapid a rise to fame has had few parallels, and was certainly not approached until Byron woke and found himself famous at twenty-four. Pope was eager for the praise of remarkable precocity, and was weak and insincere enough to alter the dates of some of his writings in order to strengthen his claim. Yet, even when we accept the corrected accounts of recent enquirers, there is no doubt that he gave proofs at a very early age of an extraordinary command of the resources of his art. It is still more evident that his merits were promptly and frankly recognized by his contemporaries. Great men and distinguished authors held out friendly hands to him ; and he never had to undergo, even for a brief period, the dreary

... a man of loftier but less
 ... compelled to pass. And
 ... that, even in this early
 ... success, and the young man's
 ... have been soothed by the
 ... he excited and returned
 ... which lasted through his life.
 ... three distinct periods. The trans-
 ... great work of the middle period
 ... as he wrote the moral and sati-
 ... is now best known. The earlier
 ... now to deal, was one of experi-
 ... various fields of poetry, with varying
 ... aim. Pope had already, as we
 ... the process of "filling his
 ... the epic poem which happily
 ... flames. He had translated many
 ... his fancy in the classics, especially
 ... of Ovid and Statius. Following
 ... some of Chaucer into modern
 ... a fashion which had not as yet
 ... he had composed certain pastorals
 ... Theocritus and Virgil. These early pro-
 ... written under the eye of Trumbull;
 ... about in manuscript; Wycherley,
 ... had shown them to Walsh, himself an
 ... same class. Granville, afterwards Lord
 ... small poet, read them, and professed
 ... another Virgil; whilst Congreve,
 ... Halifax, and other men of weight, con-
 ... read, admire, and criticize. Old Tonson,
 ... for Dryden, wrote a polite note to
 ... only seventeen, saying that he had seen one of

the Pastorals in the hands of Congreve and Walsh, "which was extremely fine," and requesting the honour of printing it. Three years afterwards it accordingly appeared in Tonson's Miscellany, a kind of annual, of which the first numbers had been edited by Dryden. Such miscellanies more or less discharged the function of a modern magazine. The plan, said Pope to Wycherley, is very useful to the poets, "who, like other thieves, escape by getting into a crowd." The volume contained contributions from Buckingham, Garth, and Rowe; it closed with Pope's Pastorals, and opened with another set of pastorals by Ambrose Philips—a combination which, as we shall see, led to one of Pope's first quarrels.

The Pastorals have been seriously criticized; but they are, in truth, mere school-boy exercises; they represent nothing more than so many experiments in versification. The pastoral form had doubtless been used in earlier hands to embody true poetic feeling; but in Pope's time it had become hopelessly threadbare. The fine gentlemen in wigs and laced coats amused themselves by writing about nymphs and "conscious swains," by way of asserting their claims to elegance of taste. Pope, as a boy, took the matter seriously, and always retained a natural fondness for a juvenile performance upon which he had expended great labour, and which was the chief proof of his extreme precocity. He invites attention to his own merits, and claims especially the virtue of propriety. He does not, he tells us, like some other people, make his roses and daffodils bloom in the same season, and cause his nightingales to sing in November; and he takes particular credit for having remembered that there were no wolves in England, and having accordingly excised a passage in which Alexis prophesied that those animals would grow milder as they

listened to the strains of his favourite nymph. When a man has got so far as to bring to England all the pagan deities, and rival shepherds contending for bowls and lambs in alternate strophes, these niceties seem a little out of place. After swallowing such a camel of an anachronism as is contained in the following lines, it is ridiculous to pride oneself upon straining at a gnat :—

Inspire me, says Strephon,

Inspire me, Phœbus, in my Delia's praise
With Waller's strains or Granville's moving lays.
A milkwhite bull shall at your altars stand,
That threatens a fight, and spurns the rising sand.

Granville would certainly not have felt more surprised at meeting a wolf, than at seeing a milk-white bull sacrificed to Phœbus on the banks of the Thames. It would be a more serious complaint that Pope, who can thus admit anachronisms as daring as any of those which provoked Johnson in *Lycidas*, shows none of that exquisite feeling for rural scenery which is one of the superlative charms of Milton's early poems. Though country-bred, he talks about country sights and sounds as if he had been brought up at Christ's Hospital, and read of them only in Virgil. But, in truth, it is absurd to dwell upon such points. The sole point worth notice in the *Pastorals* is the general sweetness of the versification. Many corrections show how carefully Pope had elaborated these early lines, and by what patient toil he was acquiring the peculiar qualities of style in which he was to become pre-eminent. We may agree with Johnson that Pope performing upon a pastoral pipe is rather a ludicrous person, but for mere practice even nonsense verses have been found useful.

The young gentleman was soon to give a far more characteristic specimen of his peculiar powers. Poets,

according to the ordinary rule, should begin by exuberant fancy, and learn to prune and refine as the reasoning faculties develope. But Pope was from the first a conscious and deliberate artist. He had read the fashionable critics of his time, and had accepted their canons as an embodiment of irrefragable reason. His head was full of maxims, some of which strike us as palpable truisms, and others as typical specimens of wooden pedantry. Dryden had set the example of looking upon the French critics as authoritative lawgivers in poetry. Boileau's art of poetry was carefully studied, as bits of it were judiciously appropriated by Pope. Another authority was the great Bossu, who wrote in 1675 a treatise on epic poetry; and the modern reader may best judge of the doctrines characteristic of the school, by the naive pedantry with which Addison, the typical man of taste of his time, invokes the authority of Bossu and Aristotle, in his exposition of *Paradise Lost*.¹ English writers were treading in the steps of Boileau and Horace. Roscommon selected for a poem the lively topic of "translated verse," and Sheffield had written with Dryden an essay upon satire, and afterwards a more elaborate essay upon poetry. To these masterpieces, said Addison, another masterpiece was now added by Pope's *Essay upon Criticism*. Not only did Addison applaud, but later critics have spoken of their wonder at the penetration, learning, and taste exhibited by so young a man. The essay was carefully finished. Written apparently in 1709, it was published in 1711. This was as short a time, said Pope to Spence, as he ever let anything of his lie by him; he

¹ Any poet who followed Bossu's rules, said Voltaire, might be certain that no one would read him, happily it was impossible to follow them.

no doubt employed it, according to his custom, in correcting and revising, and he had prepared himself by carefully digesting the whole in prose. It is, however, written without any elaborate logical plan, though it is quite sufficiently coherent for its purpose. The maxims on which Pope chiefly dwells are, for the most part, the obvious rules which have been the common property of all generations of critics. One would scarcely ask for originality in such a case, any more than one would desire a writer on ethics to invent new laws of morality. We require neither Pope nor Aristotle to tell us that critics should not be pert nor prejudiced; that fancy should be regulated by judgment; that apparent facility comes by long training; that the sound should have some conformity to the meaning; that genius is often envied; and that dulness is frequently beyond the reach of reproof. We might even guess, without the authority of Pope, backed by Bacon, that there are some beauties which cannot be taught by method, but must be reached "by a kind of felicity." It is not the less interesting to notice Pope's skill in polishing these rather rusty sayings into the appearance of novelty. In a familiar line Pope gives us the view which he would himself apply in such cases.

True wit is nature to advantage dress'd,
What oft was thought, but ne'er so well express'd.

The only fair question, in short, is whether Pope has managed to give a lasting form to some of the floating commonplaces which have more or less suggested themselves to every writer. If we apply this test, we must admit that if the essay upon criticism does not show deep thought, it shows singular skill in putting old truths. Pope undeniably succeeded in hitting off many phrases

11.] FIRST PERIOD OF POPE'S LITERARY CAREER. 27

of marked felicity. He already showed the power, in which he was probably unequalled, of coining aphorisms out of commonplace. Few people read the essay now, but everybody is aware that "fools rush in where angels fear to tread," and has heard the warning—

A little learning is a dangerous thing,
Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring—

maxims which may not commend themselves as strictly accurate to a scientific reasoner, but which have as much truth as one can demand from an epigram. And besides many sayings which share in some degree their merit, there are occasional passages which rise, at least, to the height of graceful rhetoric if they are scarcely to be called poetical. One simile was long famous, and was called by Johnson the best in the language. It is that in which the sanguine youth, overwhelmed by a growing perception of the boundlessness of possible attainments, is compared to the traveller crossing the mountains, and seeing—

Hills peep o'er hills and Alps on Alps arise.

The poor simile is pretty well forgotten, but is really a good specimen of Pope's brilliant declamation.

The essay, however, is not uniformly polished. Between the happier passages we have to cross stretches of flat prose twisted into rhyme; Pope seems to have intentionally pitched his style at a prosaic level as fitter for didactic purposes; but besides this we here and there come upon phrases which are not only elliptical and slovenly, but defy all grammatical construction. This was a blemish to which Pope was always strangely liable. It was perhaps due in part to over-correction, when the context was forgotten and the subject had lost its fresh-

ness. Critics, again, have remarked upon the poverty of the rhymes, and observed that he makes ten rhymes to "wit" and twelve to "sense." The frequent recurrence of the words is the more awkward because they are curiously ambiguous. "Wit" was beginning to receive its modern meaning; but Pope uses it vaguely as sometimes equivalent to intelligence in general, sometimes to the poetic faculty, and sometimes to the erratic fancy, which the true poet restrains by sense. Pope would have been still more puzzled if asked to define precisely what he meant by the antithesis between nature and art. They are somehow opposed, yet art turns out to be only "nature methodized." We have indeed a clue for our guidance; to study nature, we are told, is the same thing as to study Homer, and Homer should be read day and night, with Virgil for a comment and Aristotle for an expositor. Nature, good sense, Homer, Virgil, and the Stagyrte all, it seems, come to much the same thing.

It would be very easy to pick holes in this very loose theory. But it is better to try to understand the point of view indicated; for, in truth, Pope is really stating the assumptions which guided his whole career. No one will accept his position at the present time; but any one who is incapable of, at least, a provisional sympathy, may as well throw Pope aside at once, and with Pope most contemporary literature.

The dominant figure in Pope's day was the Wit. The wit—taken personally—was the man who represented what we now describe by culture or the spirit of the age. Bright clear common sense was for once having its own way, and tyrannizing over the faculties from which it too often suffers violence. The favoured faculty

never doubted its own qualification for supremacy in every department. In metaphysics it was triumphing with Hobbes and Locke over the remnants of scholasticism; under Tillotson, it was expelling mystery from religion; and in art it was declaring war against the extravagant, the romantic, the mystic, and the Gothic,—a word then used as a simple term of abuse. Wit and sense are but different avatars of the same spirit; wit was the form in which it showed itself in coffee-houses, and sense that in which it appeared in the pulpit or parliament. When Walsh told Pope to be correct, he was virtually advising him to carry the same spirit into poetry. The classicism of the time was the natural corollary; for the classical models were the historical symbols of the movement which Pope represented. He states his view very tersely in the essay. Classical culture had been overwhelmed by the barbarians, and the monks “finished what the Goths began.” Letters revived when the study of classical models again gave an impulse and supplied a guidance.

At length Erasmus, that great injured name,
The glory of the priesthood and their shame,
Stemm'd the wild torrent of a barbarous age,
And drove these holy Vandals off the stage.

The classicalism of Pope's time was no doubt very different from that of the period of Erasmus; but in his view it differed only because the contemporaries of Dryden had more thoroughly dispersed the mists of the barbarism which still obscured the Shakspearean age, and from which even Milton or Cowley had not completely escaped. Dryden and Boileau and the French critics, with their interpreters Roscommon, Sheffield, and Walsh, who found rules in Aristotle, and drew their

precedents from Homer, were at last stating the pure canons of unadulterated sense. To this school, wit and sense, and nature, and the classics, all meant pretty much the same. That was pronounced to be unnatural which was too silly, or too far-fetched, or too exalted, to approve itself to the good sense of a wit ; and the very incarnation and eternal type of good sense and nature was to be found in the classics. The test of thorough polish and refinement was the power of ornamenting a speech with an appropriate phrase from Horace or Virgil, or prefixing a Greek motto to an essay in the *Spectator*. If it was necessary to give to any utterance an air of philosophical authority, a reference to Longinus or Aristotle was the natural device. Perhaps the acquaintance with classics might not be very profound ; but the classics supplied at least a convenient symbol for the spirit which had triumphed against Gothic barbarism and scholastic pedantry.

Even the priggish wits of that day were capable of being bored by didactic poetry, and especially by such didactic poetry as resolved itself too easily into a string of maxims, not more poetical in substance than the immortal " 'Tis a sin to steal a pin." The essay—published anonymously—did not make any rapid success till Pope sent round copies to well-known critics. Addison's praise and Dennis's abuse helped, as we shall presently see, to give it notoriety. Pope, however, returned from criticism to poetry, and his next performance was in some degree a fresh, but far less puerile, performance upon the pastoral pipe.² Nothing could be more natural than

² There is the usual contradiction as to the date of composition of *Windsor Forest*. Part seems to have been written early (Pope says 1704), and part certainly not before 1712.

for the young poet to take for a text the forest in which he lived. Dull as the natives might be, their dwelling-place was historical, and there was an excellent precedent for such a performance. Pope, as we have seen, was familiar with Milton's juvenile poems ; but such works as the *Allegro* and *Penseroso* were too full of the genuine country spirit to suit his probable audience. Wycherley, whom he frequently invited to come to Binfield, would undoubtedly have found Milton a bore. But Sir John Denham, a thoroughly masculine, if not, as Pope calls him, a majestic poet, was a guide whom the Wycherleys would respect. His *Cooper's Hill* (in 1642) was the first example of what Johnson calls local poetry—poetry, that is, devoted to the celebration of a particular place ; and, moreover, it was one of the early models of the rhythm which became triumphant in the hands of Dryden. One couplet is still familiar :—

Though deep, yet clear ; though gentle, yet not dull ;
Strong without rage ; without o'erflowing, full.

The poem has some vigorous descriptive touches, but is in the main a forcible expression of the moral and political reflections which would be approved by the admirers of good sense in poetry.

Pope's *Windsor Forest*, which appeared in the beginning of 1713, is closely and avowedly modelled upon this original. There is still a considerable infusion of the puerile classicism of the *Pastorals*, which contrasts awkwardly with Denham's strength, and a silly episode about the nymph Lodona changed into the river Loddon by Diana, to save her from the pursuit of Pan. But the style is animated, and the descriptions, though seldom original, show Pope's frequent felicity of language.

Wordsworth, indeed, was pleased to say that Pope had here introduced almost the only "new images of internal nature" to be found between Milton and Thomson. Probably the good Wordsworth was wishing to do a little bit of excessive candour. Pope will not introduce his scenery without a turn suited to the taste of the town:—

Here waving groves a chequer'd scene display,
And part admit and part exclude the day ;
As some coy nymph her lover's fond address,
Nor quite indulges nor can quite repress.

He has some well turned lines upon the sports of the forest, though they are clearly not the lines of a sportsman. They betray something of the sensitive lad's shrinking from the rough squires whose only literature consisted of Durfey's songs, and who would have heartily laughed at his sympathy for a dying pheasant. I may observe in passing that Pope always showed the true poet's tenderness for the lower animals, and disgust at bloodshed. He loved his dog, and said that he would have inscribed over his grave, "O rare Bounce," but for the appearance of ridiculing "rare Ben Jonson." He spoke with horror of a contemporary dissector of live dogs, and the pleasantest of his papers in the *Guardian* is a warm remonstrance against cruelty to animals. He "dares not" attack hunting, he says—and, indeed, such an attack requires some courage even at the present day—but he evidently has no sympathy with huntsmen, and has to borrow his description from Statius, which was hardly the way to get the true local colour. *Windsor Forest*, however, like *Cooper's Hill*, speedily diverges into historical and political reflections. The barbarity of the old forest laws, the poets Denham and Cowley and Surrey, who had sung on the banks of the Thames, and

the heroes who made Windsor illustrious, suggest obvious thoughts, put into verses often brilliant, though sometimes affected, varied by a compliment to Trumbull and an excessive eulogy of Granville, to whom the poem is inscribed. The whole is skilfully adapted to the time by a brilliant eulogy upon the peace which was concluded just as the poem was published. The Whig poet Tickell, soon to be Pope's rival, was celebrating the same "lofty theme" on his "artless reed," and introducing a pretty little compliment to Pope. To readers who have lost the taste for poetry of this class one poem may seem about as good as the other; but Pope's superiority is plain enough to a reader who will condescend to distinguish. His verses are an excellent specimen of his declamatory style - polished, epigrammatic, and well expressed; and, though keeping far below the regions of true poetry, preserving just that level which would commend them to the literary statesmen and the politicians at Will's and Button's. Perhaps some advocate of Free Trade might try upon a modern audience the lines in which Pope expresses his aspiration in a footnote that London may one day become a "FREE PORT." There is at least not one antiquated or obscure phrase in the whole. Here are half-a-dozen lines -

The time shall come, when, free as sea and wind,
Unbounded Thames shall flow for all mankind,
Whole nations enter with each swelling tide,
And seas but join the regions they divide.
Earth's distant ends our glory shall behold,
And the new world launch forth to seek the old.

In the next few years Pope found other themes for the display of his declamatory powers. Of the *Temple of Fame* (1715), a frigid imitation of Chaucer, I need only say that it is one of Pope's least successful performances,

but I must notice more fully two rhetorical poems which appeared in 1717. These were the *Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady* and the *Eloisa to Abelard*. Both poems, and especially the last, have received the warmest praises from Pope's critics, and even from critics who were most opposed to his school. They are, in fact, his chief performances of the sentimental kind. Written in his youth, and yet when his powers of versification had reached their fullest maturity, they represent an element generally absent from his poetry. Pope was at the period in which, if ever, a poet should sing of love, and in which we expect the richest glow and fervour of youthful imagination. Pope was neither a Burns, nor a Byron, nor a Keats: but here, if anywhere, we should find those qualities in which he has most affinity to the poets of passion or of sensuous emotion, not soured by experience or purified by reflection. The motives of the two poems were skilfully chosen. Pope—as has already appeared to

the story narrated in them must have been authentic, and one of his own correspondents (Caryll) begged him for an explanation of the facts. Pope gave no answer, but left a posthumous note to an edition of his letters calculated, perhaps intended, to mystify future inquirers. The lady, a Mrs. Weston, to whom the note pointed, did not die till 1724, and could therefore not have committed suicide in 1717. The mystification was childish enough, though if Pope had committed no worse crime of the kind, one would not consider him to be a very grievous offender. The inquiries of Mr. Dilke, who cleared up this puzzle, show that there were in fact two ladies, Mrs. Weston and a Mrs. Cope, known to Pope about this time, both of whom suffered under some domestic persecution. Pope seems to have taken up their cause with energy, and sent money to Mrs. Cope when, at a later period, she was dying abroad in great distress. His zeal seems to have been sincere and generous, and it is possible enough that the elegy was a reflection of his feelings, though it suggested an imaginary state of facts. If this be so, the reference to the lady in his posthumous note contained some relation to the truth, though if taken too literally it would be misleading.

The poems themselves are, beyond all doubt, impressive compositions. They are vivid and admirably worked. "Here," says Johnson of the *Eloisa to Abelard*, the most important of the two, "is particularly observable the *curiosa felicitas*, a fruitful soil and careful cultivation. Here is no crudeness of sense, nor asperity of language." So far there can be no dispute. The style has the highest degree of technical perfection, and it is generally added that the poems are as pathetic as they are exquisitely written. Bowles, no hearty lover of Pope, declared the

Eloisa to be “infinitely superior to everything of the kind, ancient or modern.” The tears shed, says Hazlitt of the same poem, “are drops gushing from the heart; the words are burning sighs breathed from the soul of love.” And De Quincey ends an eloquent criticism by declaring that the “lyrical tumult of the changes, the hope, the tears, the rapture, the penitence, the despair, place the reader in tumultuous sympathy with the poor distracted nun.” The pathos of the *Unfortunate Lady* has been almost equally praised, and I may quote from it a famous passage which Mackintosh repeated with emotion to repel a charge of coldness brought against Pope :—

By foreign hands thy dying eyes were closed,
By foreign hands thy decent limbs composed,
By foreign hands thy humble grave adorn'd,
By strangers honour'd and by strangers mourn'd !
What though no friends in sable weeds appear,
Grieve for an hour, perhaps, then mourn a year,
And bear about the mockery of woe
To midnight dances and the public show ?
What though no weeping loves thy ashes grace,
Nor polish'd marble emulate thy face ?
What though no sacred earth allow thee room,
Nor hallow'd dirge be mutter'd o'er thy tomb ?
Yet shall thy grave with rising flowers be dress'd,
And the green turf lie lightly on thy breast ;
There shall the morn her earliest tears bestow,
There the first roses of the year shall blow ;
While angels with their silver wings o'ershade
The ground, now sacred by thy reliques made.

The more elaborate poetry of the *Eloisa* is equally polished throughout, and too much praise cannot easily be bestowed upon the skill with which the romantic scenery of the convent is indicated in the background, and the force with which Pope has given the revulsions of feeling of

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his unfortunate heroine from earthly to heavenly love, and from keen remorse to renewed gusts of overpowering passion. All this may be said, and without opposing high critical authority. And yet, I must also say, whether with or without authority, that I, at least, can read the poems without the least "disposition to cry," and that a single pathetic touch of Cowper or Wordsworth strikes incomparably deeper. And if I seek for a reason, it seems to be simply that Pope never crosses the undefinable, but yet ineffaceable, line which separates true poetry from rhetoric. The *Eloisa* ends rather flatly by one of Pope's characteristic aphorisms. "He best can paint them (the woes, that is, of *Eloisa*) who shall feel them most ;" and it is characteristic, by the way, that even in these his most impassioned verses, the lines which one remembers are of the same epigrammatic stamp, e.g. :

A heap of dust alone remains of thee,
'Tis all thou art and all the proud shall be !

I mourn the lover, not lament the fault.

How happy is the blameless vestal's lot,
The world forgetting, by the world forgot.

The worker in moral aphorisms cannot forget himself even in the full swing of his fervid declamation. I have no doubt that Pope so far exemplified his own doctrine that he truly felt whilst he was writing. His feelings make him eloquent, but they do not enable him to "snatch a grace beyond the reach of art," to blind us for a moment to the presence of the consummate workman, judiciously blending his colours, heightening his effects, and skilfully managing his transitions or consciously introducing an abrupt outburst of a new mood. The smoothness of the verses imposes monotony even upon the varying pas-

sions which are supposed to struggle in Eloisa's breast. It is not merely our knowledge that Pope is speaking dramatically which prevents us from receiving the same kind of impressions as we receive from poetry—such, for example, as some of Cowper's minor pieces—into which we know that a man is really putting his whole heart. The comparison would not be fair, for in such cases we are moved by knowledge of external facts as well as by the poetic power. But it is simply that Pope always resembles an orator whose gestures are studied, and who thinks while he is speaking of the fall of his robes and the attitude of his hands. He is throughout academical ; and though knowing with admirable nicety how grief should be represented, and what have been the expedients of his best predecessors, he misses the one essential touch of spontaneous impulse.

One other blemish is perhaps more fatal to the popularity of the *Eloisa*. There is a taint of something unwholesome and effeminate. Pope, it is true, is only following the language of the original in the most offensive passages ; but we see too plainly that he has dwelt too fondly upon those passages, and worked them up with especial care. We need not be prudish in our judgment of impassioned poetry ; but when the passion has this false ring, the ethical coincides with the æsthetic objection.

I have mentioned these poems here, because they seem to be the development of the rhetorical vein which appeared in the earlier work. But I have passed over another work which has sometimes been regarded as his masterpiece. A Lord Petre had offended a Miss Fermor by stealing a lock of her hair. She thought that he showed more gallantry than courtesy, and some unplea-

sant feeling resulted between the families. Pope's friend, Caryll, thought that it might be appeased if the young poet would turn the whole affair into friendly ridicule. Nobody, it might well be supposed, had a more dexterous touch ; and a brilliant trifle from his hands, just fitted for the atmosphere of drawing-rooms, would be a convenient peace-offering, and was the very thing in which he might be expected to succeed. Pope accordingly set to work at a dainty little mock-heroic, in which he describes, in playful mockery of the conventional style, the fatal coffee-drinking at Hampton, in which the too daring peer appropriated the lock. The poem received the praise which it well deserved ; for certainly the young poet had executed his task to a nicety. No more brilliant, sparkling, vivacious trifle, is to be found in our literature than the *Rape of the Lock*, even in this early form. Pope received permission from the lady to publish it in Lintot's *Miscellany* in 1712, and a wider circle admired it, though it seems that the lady and her family began to think that young Mr. Pope was making rather too free with her name. Pope meanwhile, animated by his success, hit upon a singularly happy conception, by which he thought that the poem might be rendered more important. The solid critics of those days were much occupied with the machinery of epic poems ; the machinery being composed of the gods and goddesses who, from the days of Homer, had attended to the fortunes of heroes. He had hit upon a curious French book, the *Conte de Gubalis*, which professes to reveal the mysteries of the Rosieruans, and it occurred to him that the elemental sylphs and gnomes would serve his purpose admirably. He spoke of his new device to Addison, who administered—and there is not the slightest reason for doubting his per-

fect sincerity and good meaning—a little dose of cold water. The poem, as it stood, was a “delicious little thing”—*merum sal*—and it would be a pity to alter it. Pope, however, adhered to his plan, made a splendid success, and thought that Addison must have been prompted by some mean motive. The *Rape of the Lock* appeared in its new form, with sylphs and gnomes, and an ingenious account of a game at cards and other improvements, in 1714. Pope declared, and critics have agreed, that he never showed more skill than in the remodelling of this poem; and it has ever since held a kind of recognised supremacy amongst the productions of the drawing-room muse.

The reader must remember that the so-called heroic style of Pope's period is now hopelessly effete. No human being would care about machinery and the rules of Bossu, or read without utter weariness the mechanical imitations of Homer and Virgil which were occasionally attempted by the Blackmores and other less ponderous versifiers. The shadow grows dim with the substance. The burlesque loses its point when we care nothing for the original; and, so far, Pope's bit of filigree-work, as Hazlitt calls it, has become tarnished. The very mention of beaux and belles suggests the kind of feeling with which we disinter fragments of old-world finery from the depths of an ancient cabinet, and even the wit is apt to sound wearisome. And further, it must be allowed to some hostile critics that Pope has a worse defect. The poem is, in effect, a satire upon feminine frivolity. It continues the strain of mockery against hoops and patches and their wearers, which supplied Addison and his colleagues with the materials of so many *Spectators*. I think that even in Addison there is something which rather jars upon us.

His persiflage is full of humour and kindness, but underlying it there is a tone of superiority to women which is sometimes offensive. It is taken for granted that a woman is a fool, or at least should be flattered if any man condescends to talk sense to her. With Pope this tone becomes harsher, and the merciless satirist begins to show himself. In truth, Pope can be imitantly pungent, but he can never be simply playful. Addison was too condescending with his pretty pupils; but under Pope's courtesy there lurks contempt, and his smile has a disagreeable likeness to a sneer. If Addison's manner sometimes suggests the blandness of a don who classes women with the inferior beings unworthy of the Latin grammar, Pope suggests the brilliant wit whose contempt has a keener edge from his resentment against fine ladies blinded to his genius by his personal deformity.

Even in his dedication, Pope, with unconscious impertinence, insults his heroine for her presumable ignorance of his critical jargon. His smart epigrams want but a slight change of tone to become satire. It is the same writer who begins an essay on women's characters by telling a woman that her sex is a compound of

Matter too soft a lasting mask to bear,
And best distinguished by black, brown, or fair.

and communicates to her the pleasant truth that

Every woman is at heart a rake.

Women, in short, are all frivolous beings, whose one genuine interest is in love-making. The same sentiment is really implied in the more playful lines in the *Rape of the Lock*. The sylphs are warned by omens that some misfortune impends, but they don't know what.

Whether the nymph shall break Diana's law,
Or some frail china jar receive a flaw;

Or stain her honour or her new brocade,
Forget her prayers or miss a masquerade;
Or lose her heart or necklace at a ball,
Or whether heaven has doom'd that Shock must fall.

We can understand that Miss Fermor would feel such raillery to be equivocal. It may be added, that an equal want of delicacy is implied in the mock-heroic battle at the end, where the ladies are gifted with an excess of screaming power :—

‘ Restore the lock ! ’ she cries, and all around
‘ Restore the lock,’ the vaulted roofs rebound—
Not fierce Othello in so loud a strain
Roar’d for the handkerchief that caused his pain.

These faults, though far from trifling, are yet felt only as blemishes in the admirable beauty and brilliance of the poem. The successive scenes are given with so firm and clear a touch—there is such a sense of form, the language is such a dexterous elevation of the ordinary social world into the mock-heroic, that it is impossible not

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of a coquette, and is almost an allegory of the spirit of poetic fancy in slavery to polished society.

Gums and pomatums shall his flight restrain
While clogg'd he beats his silken wings in vain.

Pope's Ariel is a parody of the ethereal being into whom Shakspeare had refined the ancient fairy ; but it is a parody which still preserves a sense of the delicate and graceful. The ancient race which appeared for the last time in this travesty of the fashion of Queen Anne, still showed some touch of its ancient beauty. Since that time no fairy has appeared without being hopelessly childish or affected.

Let us now turn from the poems to the author's personal career during the same period. In the remarkable autobiographic poem called the *Epistle to Arbuthnot*, Pope speaks of his early patrons and friends, and adds—

Soft were my numbers ; who could take offence
When pure description held the place of sense ?
Like gentle Fanny's was my flow'ry theme,
A painted mistress or a purling stream.
Yet then did Gildon draw his venal quill—
I wish'd the man a dinner, and sat still.
Yet then did Dennis rave in furious fret ;
I never answer'd,—I was not in debt.

Pope's view of his own career suggests the curious problem : how it came to pass that so harmless a man should be the butt of so many hostilities ? How could any man be angry with a writer of gentle pastorals and versified love-letters ? The answer of Pope was, that this was the normal state of things. "The life of a wit," he says, in the preface to his works, "is a warfare upon earth ;" and the warfare results from the hatred of men of genius natural to the dull. Had any one else made such a statement, Pope would have

seen its resemblance to the complaint of the one reasonable juryman overpowered by eleven obstinate fellows. But we may admit that an intensely sensitive nature is a bad qualification for a public career. A man who ventures into the throng of competitors without a skin will be tortured by every touch, and suffer the more if he turns to retaliate.

Pope's first literary performances had not been so harmless as he suggests. Amongst the minor men of letters of the day was the surly John Dennis. He was some thirty years Pope's senior; a writer of dreary tragedies which had gained a certain success by their Whiggish tendencies, and of ponderous disquisitions upon critical questions, not much cruder in substance though heavier in form than many utterances of Addison or Steele. He could, however, snarl out some shrewd things when provoked, and was known to the most famous wits of the day. He had corresponded with Dryden, Congreve, and Wycherley, and published some of their letters. Pope, it seems, had been introduced to him by Cromwell, but they had met only two or three times. When Pope had become ashamed of following Wycherley about like a dog, he would soon find out that a Dennis did not deserve the homage of a rising genius. Possibly Dennis had said something of Pope's Pastorals, and Pope had probably been a witness, perhaps more than a mere witness, to some passage of arms in which Dennis lost his temper. In mere youthful impertinence he introduced an offensive touch in the *Essay upon Criticism*. It would be well, he said, if critics could advise authors freely,—

But Appius reddens at each word you speak,
And stares, tremendous, with a threatening eye,
Like some fierce tyrant in old tapestry.

The name Appius referred to Dennis's tragedy of *Appius and Virginia*, a piece now recollected solely by the fact that poor Dennis had invented some new thunder for the performance, and by his piteous complaint against the actors for afterwards "stealing his thunder," had started a proverbial expression. Pope's reference stung Dennis to the quick. He replied by a savage pamphlet, pulling Pope's essay to pieces, and hitting some real blots, but diverging into the coarsest personal abuse. Not content with saying in his preface that he was attacked with the utmost falsehood and calumny by a little affected hypocrite, who had nothing in his mouth but truth, candour, and good-nature, he reviled Pope for his personal defects; insinuated that he was a hunch-backed toad; declared that he was the very shape of the bow of the god of love; that he might be thankful that he was born a modern, for had he been born of Greek parents his life would have been no longer than that of one of his poems, namely, half a day, and that his outward form, however like a monkey's, could not deviate more from the average of humanity than his mind. These amenities gave Pope his first taste of good savage slashing abuse. The revenge was out of all proportion to the offence. Pope, at first, seemed to take the assault judiciously. He kept silence, and simply marked some of the faults exposed by Dennis for alteration. But the wound rankled, and when an opportunity presently offered itself, Pope struck savagely at his enemy. To show how this came to pass, I must rise from poor old Dennis to a more exalted literary sphere.

The literary world, in which Dryden had recently been, and Pope was soon to be, the most conspicuous figure, was for the present under the mild dictatorship of

Addison. We know Addison as one of the most kindly and delicate of humourists, and we can perceive the gentleness which made him one of the most charming of companions in a small society. His sense of the ludicrous saved him from the disagreeable ostentation of powers which were never applied to express bitterness of feeling or to edge angry satire. The reserve of his sensitive nature made access difficult, but he was so transparently modest and unassuming that his shyness was not, as is too often the case, mistaken for pride. It is easy to understand the posthumous affection which Macaulay has so eloquently expressed, and the contemporary popularity which, according to Swift, would have made people unwilling to refuse him had he asked to be king. And yet I think that one cannot read Addison's praises without a certain recalcitration, like that which one feels in the case of the model boy who wins all the prizes, including that for good conduct. It is hard to feel very enthusiastic about a virtue whose dictates coincide so precisely with the demands of decorum, and which leads by so easy a path to reputation and success. Popularity is more often significant of the tact which makes a man avoid giving offence, than of the warm impulses of a generous nature. A good man who mixes with the world ought to be hated, if not to hate. But whatever we may say against his excessive goodness, Addison deserved and received universal esteem, which in some cases became enthusiastic. Foremost amongst his admirers was the warm-hearted, reckless, impetuous Steele, the typical Irishman ; and amongst other members of his little senate—as Pope called it—were Ambrose Philips and Tickell, young men of letters and sound Whig politics, and more or less competitors of Pope in literature. When Pope was first becoming known in

London the Whigs were out of power; Addison and his friends were generally to be found at Button's Coffee-house in the afternoon, and were represented to the society of the time by the *Spectator*, which began in March, 1711, and appeared daily to the end of 1712. Naturally, the young Pope would be anxious to approach this famous clique, though his connexions lay in the first instance amongst the Jacobite and Catholic families. Steele, too, would be glad to welcome so promising a contributor to the *Spectator* and its successor the *Guardian*.

Pope, we may therefore believe, was heartily delighted when, some months after Dennis's attack, a notice of his *Essay upon Criticism* appeared in the *Spectator*, December 20, 1711. The reviewer censured some attacks upon contemporaries—a reference obviously to the lines upon Dennis—which the author had admitted into his "very fine poem;" but there were compliments enough to overbalance this slight reproof. Pope wrote a letter of acknowledgment to Steele, overflowing with the sincerest gratitude of a young poet on his first recognition by a high authority. Steele, in reply, disclaimed the article, and promised to introduce Pope to its real author, the great Addison himself. It does not seem that the acquaintance thus opened with the Addisonians ripened very rapidly, or led to any considerable results. Pope, indeed, is said to have written some *Spectators*. He certainly sent to Steele his *Messiah*, a sacred eclogue in imitation of Virgil's *Pollio*. It appeared on May 14th, 1712, and is one of Pope's dexterous pieces of workmanship, in which phrases from Isaiah are so strung together as to form a good imitation of the famous poem which was once supposed to entitle Virgil to some place among the inspired heralds of Christianity. Pope sent

another letter or two to Steele, which look very much like intended contributions to the *Spectator*, and a short letter about Hadrian's verses to his soul, which appeared in November, 1712. When, in 1713, the *Guardian* succeeded the *Spectator*, Pope was one of Steele's contributors, and a paper by him upon dedications appeared as the fourth number. He soon gave a more remarkable proof of his friendly relations with Addison.

It is probable that no first performance of a play upon the English stage ever excited so much interest as that of Addison's *Cato*. It was not only the work of the first man of letters of the day, but it had, or was taken to have, a certain political significance. "The time was come," says Johnson, "when those who affected to think liberty in danger affected likewise to think that a stage-play might preserve it." Addison, after exhibiting more than the usual display of reluctance, prepared his play for representation, and it was undoubtedly taken to be in some sense a Whig manifesto. It was therefore remarkable that he should have applied to Pope for a prologue, though Pope's connexions were entirely of the anti-Whiggish kind, and a passage in *Windsor Forest*, his last new poem (it appeared in March 1713), indicated pretty plainly a refusal to accept the Whig shibboleths. In the *Forest* he was enthusiastic for the peace, and sneered at the Revolution. Pope afterwards declared that Addison had disavowed all party intentions at the time, and he accused him of insincerity for afterwards taking credit (in a poetical dedication of *Cato*) for the services rendered by his play to the cause of liberty. Pope's assertion is worthless in any case where he could exalt his own character for consistency at another man's expense, but it is true that both parties were inclined to equivocate.

It is, indeed, difficult to understand how, if any "stage-play could preserve liberty," such a play as *Cato* should do the work. The polished declamation is made up of the platitudes common to Whigs and Tories ; and Bolingbroke gave the cue to his own party when he presented fifty guineas to *Cato's* representative for defending the cause of liberty so well against a perpetual dictator. The Whigs, said Pope, design a second present when they can contrive as good a saying. Bolingbroke was, of course, aiming at Marlborough, and his interpretation was intrinsically as plausible as any that could have been devised by his antagonists. Each side could adopt *Cato* as easily as rival sects can quote the Bible ; and it seems possible that Addison may have suggested to Pope that nothing in *Cato* could really offend his principles. Addison, as Pope also tells us, thought the prologue ambiguous, and altered "*Britons, arise*" to "*Britons, attend*" lest the phrase should be thought to hint at a new revolution. Addison advised Pope about this time not to be content with the applause of "half the nation," and perhaps regarded him as one who, by the fact of his external position with regard to parties, would be a more appropriate sponsor for the play.

Whatever the intrinsic significance of *Cato*, circumstances gave it a political colour ; and Pope, in a lively description of the first triumphant night to his friend Caryll, says, that as author of the successful and very spirited prologue, he was clapped into a Whig, sorely against his will, at every two lines. Shortly before he had spoken in the warmest terms to the same correspondent of the admirable moral tendency of the work, and perhaps he had not realized the full party significance till he became conscious of the impression produced upon the audience. Not

long afterwards (letter of June 12, 1713), we find him complaining that his connexion with Steele and the *Guardian* was giving offence to some honest Jacobites. Had they known the nature of the connexion, they need hardly have grudged Steele his contributor. His next proceedings possibly suggested the piece of advice which Addison gave to Lady M. W. Montague : "Leave Pope as soon as you can ; he will certainly play you some devilish trick else."

His first trick was calculated to vex an editor's soul. Ambrose Philips, as I have said, had published certain pastorals in the same volume with Pope's. Philips, though he seems to have been less rewarded than most of his companions, was certainly accepted as an attached member of Addison's "little senate ;" and that body was not more free than other mutual admiration societies from the desire to impose its own prejudices upon the public. When Philips's *Distressed Mother*, a close imitation of Racine's *Andromaque*, was preparing for the stage, the *Spectator* was taken by Will Honeycomb to a rehearsal (*Spectator*, January 31, 1712), and Sir Roger de Coverley himself attended one of the performances (*Ib.*, March, 25) and was profoundly affected by its pathos. The last paper was of course by Addison, and is a real triumph of art as a most delicate application of humour to the slightly unworthy purpose of puffing a friend and disciple. Addison had again praised Philips's Pastorals in the *Spectator* (October 30, 1712), and amongst the early numbers of the *Guardian* were a short series of papers upon pastoral poetry, in which the fortunate Ambrose was again held up as a model, whilst no notice was taken of Pope's rival performance. Pope, one may believe, had a contempt for Philips, whose pastoral inanities, whether better or worse than his

own, had not the excuse of being youthful productions. Philips has bequeathed to our language the phrase "Namby-pamby," imposed upon him by Henry Carey (author of *Sally in our Alley*, and the clever farce *Chronhotonthologos*), and years after this he wrote a poem to Miss Pulteney in the nursery, beginning,—

"Dimply damsel, sweetly smiling,"

which may sufficiently interpret the meaning of his nickname. Pope's irritable vanity was vexed at the liberal praises bestowed on such a rival, and he revenged himself by an artifice more ingenious than scrupulous. He sent an anonymous article to Steele for the *Guardian*. It is a professed continuation of the previous papers on pastorals, and is ostensibly intended to remove the appearance of partiality arising from the omission of Pope's name. In the first paragraphs the design is sufficiently concealed to mislead an unwary reader into the belief that Philips is preferred to Pope; but the irony soon becomes transparent, and Philips's antiquated affectation is contrasted with the polish of Pope, who is said even to "deviate into downright poetry." Steele, it is said, was so far mystified as to ask Pope's permission to publish the criticism. Pope generously permitted, and accordingly Steele printed what he must soon have discovered to be a shrewd attack upon his old friend and ally. Some writers have found a difficulty in understanding how Steele could have so blundered. One might, perhaps, whisper in confidence to the discreet, that even editors are mortal, and that Steele was conceivably capable of the enormity of reading papers carelessly. Philips was furious, and hung up a birch in Button's Coffee-house, declaring that he would apply it to his tormentor should he ever show his nose in

the room. As Philips was celebrated for skill with the sword, the mode of vengeance was certainly unmanly, and stung the soul of his adversary, always morbidly sensitive to all attacks, and especially to attacks upon his person. The hatred thus kindled was never quenched, and breathes in some of Pope's bitterest lines.

If not a "devilish trick," this little performance was enough to make Pope's relations to the Addison set decidedly unpleasant. Addison is said (but the story is very improbable) to have enjoyed the joke. If so, a vexatious incident must have changed his view of Pope's pleasantries, though Pope professedly appeared as his defender. Poor old Thersites-Dennis published, during the summer, a very bitter attack upon Addison's *Cato*. He said afterwards—though, considering the relations of the men, some misunderstanding is probable—that Pope had indirectly instigated this attack through the bookseller, Lintot. If so, Pope must have deliberately contrived the trap for the unlucky Dennis; and, at any rate, he fell upon Dennis as soon as the trap was sprung. Though Dennis was a hot-headed Whig, he had quarrelled with Addison and Steele, and was probably jealous, as the author of tragedies intended, like *Cato*, to propagate Whig principles, perhaps to turn Whig prejudices to account. He writes with the bitterness of a disappointed and unlucky man, but he makes some very fair points against his enemy. Pope's retaliation took the form of an anonymous "Narrative of the Frenzy of John Dennis."³ It is written in that style of coarse personal satire of which Swift was a master, but for which Pope was very ill fitted. All his

³ Mr. Dilke, it is perhaps right to say, has given some reasons for doubting Pope's authorship of this squib; but the authenticity seems to be established, and Mr. Dilke himself hesitates.

neatness of style seems to desert him when he tries this tone, and nothing is left but a brutal explosion of contemptuous hatred. Dennis is described in his garret, pouring forth insane ravings prompted by his disgust at the success of *Cato*—but not a word is said in reply to Dennis' criticisms. It was plain enough that the author, whoever he might be, was more anxious to satisfy a grudge against Dennis than to defend Dennis's victim. It is not much of a compliment to Addison to say that he had enough good feeling to scorn such a mode of retaliation, and perspicuity enough to see that it would be little to his credit. Accordingly, in his majestic way, he caused Steele to write a note to Lintot (August 4, 1713), disavowing all complicity, and saying that if even he noticed Mr Dennis's criticisms, it should be in such a way as to give Mr. Dennis no cause of complaint. He added that he had refused to see the pamphlet when it was offered for his inspection, and had expressed his disapproval of such a mode of attack. Nothing could be more becoming, and it does not appear that Addison knew, when writing this note, that Pope was the author of the anonymous assault. If, as the biographers say, Addison's action was not kindly to Pope, it was bare justice to poor Dennis. Pope undoubtedly must have been bitterly vexed at the implied rebuff, and not the less because it was perfectly just. He seems always to have regarded men of Dennis's type as outside the pale of humanity. Their abuse stung him as keenly as if they had been entitled to speak with authority, and yet he retorted it as though they were not entitled to common decency. He would, to all appearance, have regarded an appeal for mercy to a Grub-street author much as Dandie Dumont regarded Brown's tenderness to a "brock"—as a proof of incredible imbecility, or, rather, of want of

proper antipathy to vermin. Dennis, like Philips, was inscribed on the long list of his hatreds ; and was pursued almost to the end of his unfortunate life. Pope, it is true, took great credit to himself for helping his miserable enemy when dying in distress, and wrote a prologue to a play acted for his benefit. Yet even this prologue is a sneer, and one is glad to think that Dennis was past understanding it. We hardly know whether to pity or to condemn the unfortunate poet, whose unworthy hatreds made him suffer far worse torments than those which he could inflict upon their objects.

By this time we may suppose that Pope must have been regarded with anything but favour in the Addison circle ; and, in fact, he was passing into the opposite camp, and forming a friendship with Swift and Swift's patrons. No open rupture followed with Addison for the present ; but a quarrel was approaching which is, perhaps, the most celebrated in our literary history. Unfortunately, the more closely we look, the more difficult it becomes to give any definite account of it. The statements upon which accounts have been based have been chiefly those of Pope himself ; and these involve inconsistencies and demonstrably inaccurate statements. Pope was anxious in later life to show that he had enjoyed the friendship of a man so generally beloved, and was equally anxious to show that he had behaved generously and been treated with injustice and, indeed, with downright treachery. And yet, after reading the various statements made by the original authorities, one begins to doubt whether there was any real quarrel at all ; or rather, if one may say so, whether it was not a quarrel upon one side.

It is, indeed, plain that a coolness had sprung up between Pope and Addison. Considering Pope's offences

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against the senate, his ridicule of Philips, his imposition of that ridicule upon Steele, and his indefensible use of Addison's fame as a stalking-horse in the attack upon Dennis, it is not surprising that he should have been kept at arm's length. If the rod suspended by Philips at Button's be authentic (as seems probable), the talk about Pope, in the shadow of such an ornament, is easily imaginable. Some attempts seem to have been made at a reconciliation. Jervas, Pope's teacher in painting—a bad artist, but a kindly man—tells Pope on August 20, 1714, of a conversation with Addison. It would have been worth while, he says, for Pope to have been hidden behind a wainscot or a half-length picture to have heard it. Addison expressed a wish for friendly relations, was glad that Pope had not been "carried too far among the enemy" by Swift, and hoped to be of use to him at Court—for Queen Anne died on August 1st; the wheel had turned; and the Whigs were once more the distributors of patronage. Pope's answer to Jervas is in the dignified tone; he attributes Addison's coolness to the ill offices of Philips, and is ready to be on friendly terms whenever Addison recognises his true character and independence of party. Another letter follows, as addressed by Pope to Addison himself; but here alas! if not in the preceding letters, we are upon doubtful ground. In fact, it is impossible to doubt that the letter has been manipulated after Pope's fashion, if not actually fabricated. It is so dignified as to be insulting. It is like a box on the ear administered by a pedagogue to a repentant but not quite pardoned pupil. Pope has heard (from Jervas, it is implied) of Addison's profession; he is glad to hope that the effect of some "late malevolences" is disappearing; he will not believe (that is, he is strongly inclined to believe)

that the author of *Cato* could mean one thing and say another; he will show Addison his first two books of Homer as a proof of this confidence, and hopes that it will not be abused; he challenges Addison to point out the ill nature in the *Essay upon Criticism*; and winds up by making an utterly irrelevant charge (as a proof, he says, of his own sincerity) of plagiarism against one of Addison's *Spectators*. Had such a letter been actually sent as it now stands, Addison's good nature could scarcely have held out. As it is, we can only assume that during 1714 Pope was on such terms with the clique at Button's, that a quarrel would be a natural result. According to the ordinary account the occasion presented itself in the next year.

A translation of the first Iliad by Tickell appeared (in June, 1715) simultaneously with Pope's first volume. Pope had no right to complain. No man could be supposed to have a monopoly in the translation of Homer. Tickell had the same right to try his hand as Pope; and Pope fully understood this himself. He described to Spence a conversation in which Addison told him of Tickell's intended work. Pope replied that Tickell was perfectly justified. Addison having looked over Tickell's translation of the first book, said that he would prefer not to see Pope's, as it might suggest double dealing; but consented to read Pope's second book, and praised it warmly. In all this, by Pope's own showing, Addison seems to have been scrupulously fair; and if he and the little senate preferred Tickell's work on its first appearance, they had a full right to their opinion, and Pope triumphed easily enough to pardon them. "He was meditating a criticism upon Tickell," says Johnson, "when his adversary sank before him without a blow." Pope's per-

formance was universally preferred, and even Tickell himself yielded by anticipation. He said, in a short preface, that he had abandoned a plan of translating the whole *Iliad* on finding that a much abler hand had undertaken the work, and that he only published this specimen to bespeak favour for a translation of the *Odyssey*. It was, say Pope's apologists, an awkward circumstance that Tickell should publish at the same time as Pope, and that is about all that they can say. It was, we may reply in Stephenson's phrase, very awkward - for Tickell. In all this, in fact, it seems impossible for any reasonable man to discover anything of which Pope had the slightest ground of complaint; but his amazingly irritable nature was not to be calmed by reason. The bare fact that a translation of Homer appeared contemporaneously with his own, and that it came from one of Addison's court, made him furious. He brooded over it, suspected some dark conspiracy against his fame, and gradually mistook his morbid fancies for solid inference. He thought that Tickell had been put up by Addison as his rival, and gradually worked himself into the further belief that Addison himself had actually written the translation which passed under Tickell's name. It does not appear, so far as I know, when or how this suspicion became current. Some time after Addison's death, in 1719, a quarrel took place between Tickell, his literary executor, and Steele. Tickell seemed to insinuate that Steele had not sufficiently acknowledged his obligations to Addison, and Steele, in an angry retort, called Tickell the "reputed translator" of the first *Iliad*, and challenged him to translate another book successfully. The innuendo shows that Steele, who certainly had some means of knowing, was willing to suppose that Tickell had been

helped by Addison. The manuscript of Tickell's work, which has been preserved, is said to prove this to be an error, and in any case there is no real ground for supposing that Addison did anything more than he admittedly told Pope, that is, read Tickell's manuscript and suggest corrections.

To argue seriously about other so-called proofs, would be waste of time. They prove nothing except Pope's extreme anxiety to justify his wild hypothesis of a dark conspiracy. Pope was jealous, spiteful, and credulous. He was driven to fury by Tickell's publication, which had the appearance of a competition. But angry as he was, he could find no real cause of complaint, except by imagining a fictitious conspiracy; and this complaint was never publicly uttered till long after Addison's death. Addison knew, no doubt, of Pope's wrath, but probably cared little for it, except to keep himself clear of so dangerous a companion. He seems to have remained on terms of civility with his antagonist, and no one would have been more surprised than he to hear of the quarrel, upon which so much controversy has been expended.

The whole affair, so far as Addison's character is concerned, thus appears to be a gigantic mare's nest. There is no proof, or even the slightest presumption, that Addison or Addison's friends ever injured Pope, though it is clear that they did not love him. It would have been marvellous if they had. Pope's suspicions are a proof that in this case he was almost subject to the illusion characteristic of actual insanity. The belief that a man is persecuted by hidden conspirators is one of the common symptoms in such cases; and Pope would seem to have been almost in the initial stage of mental disease. His madness, indeed, was not such as would lead us to call him morally irre-

sponsible, nor was it the kind of madness which is to be found in a good many people who well deserve criminal prosecution ; but it was a state of mind so morbid as to justify some compassion for the unhappy offender.

One result besides the illustration of Pope's character remains to be noticed. According to Pope's assertion it was a communication from Lord Warwick which led him to write his celebrated copy of verses upon Addison. Warwick (afterwards Addison's stepson) accused Addison of paying Gildon for a gross libel upon Pope. Pope wrote to Addison, he says, the next day. He said in this letter that he knew of Addison's behaviour—and that, unwilling to take a revenge of the same kind, he would rather tell Addison fairly of his faults in plain words. If he had to take such a step, it would be in some such way as followed, and he subjoined the first sketch of the famous lines. Addison, says Pope, used him very civilly ever afterwards. Indeed, if the account be true, Addison showed his Christian spirit by paying a compliment in one of his *Freeholders* (May 17th, 1716) to Pope's Homer.

Macaulay, taking the story for granted, praises Addison's magnanimity, which, I must confess, I should be hardly Christian enough to admire. It was however asserted at the time that Pope had not written the verses which have made the quarrel memorable till after Addison's death. They were not published till 1723, and are not mentioned by any independent authority till 1722, though Pope afterwards appealed to Burlington as a witness to their earlier composition. The fact seems to be confirmed by the evidence of Lady M. W. Montagu, but it does not follow that Addison ever saw the verses. He knew that Pope disliked him ; but he probably did not suspect the extent of the hostility. Pope himself appears not to have devised the worst part

of the story—that of Addison having used Tickell's name—till some years later. Addison was sufficiently magnanimous in praising his spiteful little antagonist as it was; he little knew how deeply that antagonist would seek to injure his reputation.

And here, before passing to the work which afforded the main pretext of the quarrel, it may be well to quote once more the celebrated satire. It may be remarked that its excellence is due in part to the fact that, for once, Pope does not lose his temper. His attack is qualified and really sharpened by an admission of Addison's excellence. It is therefore a real masterpiece of satire, not a simple lampoon. That it is an exaggeration is undeniable, and yet its very keenness gives a presumption that it is not altogether without foundation.

Peace to all such ! but were there one whose fires
True genius kindles and fair fame inspires ;
Blest with each talent and each art to please,
And born to write, converse, and live with ease ;
Should such a man, too fond to rule alone,
Bear, like the Turk, no brother near the throne :
View him with scornful, yet with jealous eyes,
And hate for arts that caused himself to rise ;
Damn with faint praise, assent with civil leer,
And without sneering, teach the rest to sneer ;
Willing to wound and yet afraid to strike,
Just hint a fault and hesitate dislike ;
Alike reserved to praise or to commend,
A timorous foe and a suspicious friend ;
Dreading ev'n fools, by flatterers besieged,
And so obliging that he ne'er obliged ;
Like Cato, give his little senate laws,
And sit attentive to his own applause :
While wits and templars every sentence raise,
And wonder with a foolish face of praise ;
Who would not laugh if such a man there be ?
Who would not weep, if Atticus were he ?

CHAPTER III.

POPE'S HOMER.

POPE's uneasy relations with the wits at Button's were no obstacle to his success elsewhere. Swift, now at the height of his power, was pleased by his *Windsor Forest*, recommended it to Stella, and soon made the author's acquaintance. The first letter in their long correspondence is a laboured but fairly successful piece of pleasantry from Pope, upon Swift's having offered twenty guineas to the young Papist to change his religion. It is dated December 8, 1713. In the preceding month Bishop Kennet saw Swift in all his glory, and wrote an often quoted description of the scene. Swift was bustling about in the royal antechamber, swelling with conscious importance, distributing advice, promising patronage, whispering to ministers, and filling the whole room with his presence. He finally "instructed a young nobleman that the best poet in England was Mr. Pope, a Papist, who had begun a translation of Homer into English verse, for which he must have them all subscribe; 'for,' says he, 'the author shall not begin to print till I have a thousand guineas for him!'" Swift introduced Pope to some of the leaders of the ministry, and he was soon acquainted with Oxford, Bolingbroke, Atterbury, and many other men of high position. Pope was not disinclined to pride himself upon his familiarity with the great, though boasting at

the same time of his independence. In truth, the morbid vanity which was his cardinal weakness seems to have partaken sufficiently of the nature of genuine self-respect to preserve him from any unworthy concessions. If he flattered, it was as one who expected to be repaid in kind; and though his position was calculated to turn the head of a youth of five-and-twenty, he took his place as a right without humiliating his own dignity. Whether from principle or prudence, he judiciously kept himself free from identification with either party, and both sides took a pride in supporting the great literary undertaking which he had now announced.

When Pope first circulated his proposals for translating Homer, Oxford and Bolingbroke were fellow-ministers, and Swift was their most effective organ in the press. At the time at which his first volume appeared, Bolingbroke was in exile, Oxford under impeachment, and Swift had retired, savagely and sullenly, to his deanery. Yet, through all the intervening political tempest, the subscription list grew and flourished. The pecuniary result was splendid. No author had ever made anything approaching the sum which Pope received, and very few authors, even in the present age of gold, would despise such payment. The details of the magnificent bargain have been handed down, and give the pecuniary measure of Pope's reputation.

The Iliad was to be published in six volumes. For each volume Lintot was to pay 200*l.*; and, besides this, he was to supply Pope gratuitously with the copies for his subscribers. The subscribers paid a guinea a volume, and as 575 subscribers took 654 copies, Pope received altogether 5320*l.* 4*s.* at the regular price, whilst some royal and distinguished subscribers paid larger sums. By the publication of the Odyssey Pope seems to have

made about 3500*l.* more,¹ after paying his assistants. The result was, therefore, a total profit at least approaching 9000*l.* The last volume of the *Odyssey* did not appear till 1726, and the payments were thus spread over eleven years. Pope, however, saved enough to be more than comfortable. In the South Sea excitement he ventured to speculate, but though for a time he fancied himself to have made a large sum, he seems to have retired rather a loser than a gainer. But he could say with perfect truth that, "thanks to Homer," he "could live and thrive, indebted to no prince or peer alive." The money success is, however, of less interest to us than the literary. Pope put his best work into the translation of the *Iliad*. His responsibility, he said, weighed upon him terribly on starting. He used to dream of being on a long journey, uncertain which way to go, and doubting whether he would ever get to the end. Gradually he fell into the habit of translating thirty or forty verses before getting up, and then "piddling with it" for the rest of the morning; and the regular performance of his task made it tolerable. He used, he said at another time, to take advantage of the "first heat," then correct by the original and other translations, and finally to "give it a reading for the versification only." The statement must be partly modified by the suggestion that the translations were probably consulted before the original. Pope's ignorance of Greek—an awkward qualification for a translator of Homer—is undeniable. Gilbert Wakefield, who was, I believe, a fair scholar and certainly a great admirer of Pope, declares his conviction to be, after a more careful examination of the Homer than any one is now likely to give, that Pope "collected the general purport of every

¹ See Elwin's *Pope, Correspondence*, vol. iii. p. 120.

passage from some of his predecessors—Dryden” (who only translated the first Iliad), “Dacier, Chapman, or Ogilby.” He thinks that Pope would have been puzzled to catch at once the meaning even of the Latin translation, and points out proofs of his ignorance of both languages and of “ignominious and puerile mistakes.”

It is hard to understand at the present day the audacity which could lead a man so ill qualified in point of classical acquirements to undertake such a task. And yet Pope undoubtedly achieved, in some true sense, an astonishing success. He succeeded commercially; for Lintot, after supplying the subscription copies gratuitously, and so losing the cream of the probable purchasers, made a fortune by the remaining sale. He succeeded in the judgment both of the critics and of the public of the next generation. Johnson calls the Homer “the noblest version of poetry the world has ever seen.” Gray declared that no other translation would ever equal it, and Gibbon that it had every merit except that of faithfulness to the original. This merit of fidelity, indeed, was scarcely claimed by any one. Bentley’s phrase—“a pretty poem, Mr. Pope, but you must not call it Homer”—expresses the uniform view taken from the first by all who could read both. Its fame, however, survived into the present century. Byron speaks—and speaks, I think, with genuine feeling—of the rapture with which he first read Pope as a boy, and says that no one will ever lay him down except for the original. Indeed, the testimonies of opponents are as significant as those of admirers. Johnson remarks that the Homer “may be said to have tuned the English tongue,” and that no writer since its appearance has wanted melody. Coleridge virtually admits the fact, though drawing a different conclusion, when he says that the trans-

lation of Homer has been one of the main sources of that "pseudo-poetic diction" which he and Wordsworth were struggling to put out of credit. Cowper, the earliest representative of the same movement, tried to supplant Pope's Homer by his own, and his attempt proved at least the position held in general estimation by his rival. If, in fact, Pope's Homer was a recognized model for near a century, we may dislike the style, but we must admit the power implied in a performance which thus became the accepted standard of style for the best part of a century. How, then, should we estimate the merits of this remarkable work? I give my own opinion upon the subject with diffidence, for it has been discussed by eminently qualified critics. The conditions of a satisfactory translation of Homer have been amply canvassed, and many experiments have been made by accomplished poets who have what Pope certainly had not—a close acquaintance with the original, and a fine appreciation of its superlative beauties. From the point of view now generally adopted, the task even of criticism requires this double qualification. Not only can no man translate Homer, but no man can even criticize a translation of Homer without being at once a poet and a fine classical scholar. So far as this is true, I can only apologize for speaking at all, and should be content to refer my readers to such able guides as Mr. Matthew Arnold and the late Professor Conington. And yet I think that something remains to be said which has a bearing upon Pope, however little it may concern Homer.

We—if "we" means modern writers of some classical culture—can claim to appreciate Homer far better than the contemporaries of Pope. But our appreciation involves a clear recognition of the vast difference between

ourselves and the ancient Greeks. We see the Homeric poems in their true perspective through the dim vista of shadowy centuries. We regard them as the growth of a long past stage in the historical evolution ; implying a different social order—a different ideal of life—an archaic conception of the world and its forces, only to be reconstructed for the imagination by help of long training and serious study. The multiplicity of the laws imposed upon the translator is the consequence of this perception. They amount to saying that a man must manage to project himself into a distant period, and saturate his mind with the corresponding modes of life. If the feat is possible at all, it requires a great and conscious effort, and the attainment of a state of mind which can only be preserved by constant attention. The translator has to wear a mask which is always in danger of being rudely shattered. Such an intellectual feat is likely to produce what, in the most obvious sense, one would call highly artificial work. Modern classicism must be fine-spun, and smell rather of the hothouse than the open air. Undoubtedly some exquisite literary achievements have been accomplished in this spirit ; but they are, after all, calculated for the small circle of cultivated minds, and many of their merits can be appreciated only by professors qualified by special training. Most frequently we can hope for pretty playthings, or, at best, for skilful restorations which show learning and taste far more distinctly than a glowing imagination. But even if an original poet can breathe some spirit into classical poems, the poor translator, with the dread of philologists and antiquarians in the back-ground, is so fettered that free movement becomes almost impossible. No one, I should venture to prophesy, will really succeed in such work unless he frankly accepts the im-

possibility of reproducing the original, and aims only at an equivalent for some of its aspects. The perception of this change will enable us to realize Pope's mode of approaching the problem. The condemnatory epithet most frequently applied to him is "artificial;" and yet, as I have just said, a modern translator is surely more artificial, so far as he is attempting a more radical transformation of his own thoughts into the forms of a past epoch. But we can easily see in what sense Pope's work fairly deserves the name. The poets of an older period frankly adopted the classical mythology without any apparent sense of incongruity. They mix heathen deities with Christian saints, and the ancient heroes adopt the manners of chivalrous romance without the slightest difficulty. The freedom was still granted to the writers of the renaissance. Milton makes Phœbus and St. Peter discourse in successive stanzas, as if they belonged to the same pantheon. For poetical purposes the old gods are simply canonized as Christian saints, as, in a more theological frame of mind, they are regarded as devils. In the reign of common sense this was no longer possible. The incongruity was recognized and condemned. The gods were vanishing under the clearer light, as modern thought began more consciously to assert its independence. Yet the unreality of the old mythology is not felt to be any objection to their use as conventional symbols. Homer's gods, says Pope in his preface, are still the gods of poetry. Their vitality was nearly extinct; but they were regarded as convenient personifications of abstract qualities, machines for epic poetry, or figures to be used in allegory. In the absence of a true historical perception, the same view was attributed to Homer. Homer, as Pope admits, did not invent the gods; but he was the "first

who brought them into a system of machinery for poetry," and showed his fertile imagination by clothing the properties of the elements, and the virtues and vices in forms and persons. And thus Pope does not feel that he is diverging from the spirit of the old mythology when he regards the gods, not as the spontaneous growth of the primitive imagination, but as deliberate contrivances intended to convey moral truth in allegorical fables, and probably devised by sages for the good of the vulgar.

The old gods, then, were made into stiff mechanical figures, as dreary as Justice with her scales, or Fame blowing a trumpet on a monument. They belonged to that family of dismal personifications which it was customary to mark with the help of capital letters. Certainly they are a dismal and frigid set of beings, though they still lead a shivering existence on the tops of public monuments, and hold an occasional wreath over the head of a British grenadier. To identify the Homeric gods with these wearisome constructions was to have a more serious disqualification for fully entering into Homer's spirit than even an imperfect acquaintance with Greek, and Pope is greatly exercised in his mind by their eating and drinking and fighting, and uncompromising anthropomorphism. He apologizes for his author, and tries to excuse him for unwilling compliance with popular prejudices. The Homeric theology he urges was still substantially sound, and Homer had always a distinct moral and political purpose. The *Iliad*, for example, was meant to show the wickedness of quarrelling, and the evil results of an insatiable thirst for glory, though shallow persons have thought that Homer only thought to please.

The artificial diction about which so much has been said is the natural vehicle of this treatment. The set of

phrases and the peculiar mould into which his sentences were cast, was already the accepted type for poetry which aimed at dignity. He was following Dryden as his own performance became the law for the next generation. The style in which a woman is called a nymph and women generally are "the fair" - in which shepherds are conscious swains, and a poet invokes the muses and strikes a lyre, and breathes on a reed, and a nightingale singing becomes Philomel "pouring her throat," represents a fashion as worn out as hoops and wigs. By the time of Wordsworth it was a mere survival - a dead form remaining after its true function had entirely vanished. The proposal to return to the language of common life was the natural revolt of one who desired poetry to be above all things the genuine expression of real emotion. Yet it is, I think, impossible to maintain that the diction of poetry should be simply that of common life.

The true principle would rather seem to be that any style becomes bad when it dies; when it is used merely as a tradition, and not as the best mode of producing the desired impression; and when, therefore, it represents a rule imposed from without, and is not an expression of the spontaneous working of minds in which the corresponding impulse is thoroughly incarnated. In such a case, no doubt, the diction becomes a burden, and a man is apt to fancy himself a poet because he is the slave of the external form instead of using it as the most familiar instrument. By Wordsworth's time the Pope style was thus effete, what ought to be the dress of thought had become the rigid armour into which thought was forcibly compressed, and a revolt was inevitable. We may agree, too, that his peculiar style was in a sense artificial, even in the days of Pope. It had come

into existence during the reign of the Restoration wits, under the influence of foreign models, not as the spontaneous outgrowth of a gradual development, and had therefore something mechanical and conscious, even when it flourished most vigorously. It came in with the periwigs, to which it is so often compared, and, like the artificial headgear, was an attempt to give a dignified or full-dress appearance to the average prosaic human being. Having this innate weakness of pomposity and exaggeration, it naturally expired, and became altogether ridiculous, with the generation to which it belonged. As the wit or man of the world had at bottom a very inadequate conception of epic poetry, he became inevitably strained and contorted when he tried to give himself the airs of a poet.

After making all such deductions, it would still seem that the bare fact that he was working in a generally accepted style gave Pope a very definite advantage. He spoke more or less in a falsetto, but he could at once strike a key intelligible to his audience. An earlier poet would simply annex Homer's gods and fix them with a mediæval framework. A more modern poet tries to find some style which will correspond to the Homeric as closely as possible, and feels that he is making an experiment beset with all manner of difficulties. Pope needed no more to bother himself about such matters than about grammatical or philological refinements. He found a ready-made style which was assumed to be correct; he had to write in regular rhymed couplets, as neatly rhymed and tersely expressed as might be; and the diction was equally settled. He was to keep to Homer for the substance, but he could throw in any little ornaments to suit the taste of his readers; and if they found out a want of scrupulous fidelity, he might freely say that he did not aim at such

details. Working, therefore, upon the given data, he could enjoy a considerable amount of freedom, and throw his whole energy into the task of forcible expression without feeling himself trammelled at every step. The result would certainly not be Homer, but it might be a fine epic poem as epic poetry was understood in the days of Anne and George I. —a hybrid genus, at the best, something without enough constitutional vigour to be valuable when really original, but not without a merit of its own when modelled upon the lines laid down in the great archetype.

When we look at Pope's *Iliad* upon this understanding, we cannot fail, I think, to admit that it has merits which makes its great success intelligible. If we read it as a purely English poem, the sustained vivacity and energy of the style give it a decisive superiority over its rivals. It has become the fashion to quote Chapman since the noble sonnet in which Keats, in testifying to the power of the Elizabethan translator, testifies rather to his own exquisite perception. Chapman was a poet worthy of our great poetic period, and Pope himself testifies to the "daring fiery spirit" which animates his translation, and says that it is not unlike what Homer himself might have written in his youth—surely not a grudging praise. But though this is true, I will venture to assert that Chapman also sins, not merely by his love of quaintness, but by constantly indulging in sheer doggerel. If his lines do not stagnate, they foam and fret like a mountain brook, instead of flowing continuously and majestically like a great river. He surpasses Pope chiefly, as it seems to me, where Pope's conventional verbiage smothers and conceals some vivid image from nature. Pope, of course, was a thorough man of form, and when he has to speak of sea or sky or mountain generally draws upon the current com-

of poetic phraseology, which has lost all sharpness of impression in its long circulation. Here, for example, is Pope's version of a simile in the fourth book :—

As when the winds, ascending by degrees
First move the whitening surface of the seas,
The billows float in order to the shore,
The waves behind roll on the waves before,
Till with the growing storm the deeps arise,
Foam o'er the rocks, and thunder to the skies.

Each phrase is either wrong or escapes from error by vagueness, and one would swear that Pope had never seen the sea. Chapman says,—

And as when with the west wind flaws, the sea thrusts up her waves
One after other, thick and high, upon the groaning shores,
First in herself loud, but opposed with banks and rocks she roars,
And all her back in bristles set, spits every way her foam.

This is both clumsy and introduces the quaint and unauthorized image of a pig, but it is unmistakably vivid. Pope is equally troubled when he has to deal with Homer's downright vernacular. He sometimes ventures apologetically to give the original word. He allows Achilles to speak pretty vigorously to Agamemnon in the first book :—

O monster ! mix'd of insolence and fear,
Thou dog in forehead, but in heart a deer !

Chapman translates the phrase more fully, but adds a characteristic quibble :—

Thou ever steep'd in wine,
Dog's face, with heart but of a hart.

Tickell manages the imputation of drink, but has to slur over the dog and the deer :—

Valiant with wine and furious from the bowl,
Thou fierce-look'd talker, with a coward soul.

Elsewhere Pope hesitates in the use of such plain speak-

ing. He allows Teucer to call Hector a dog, but apologises in a note. "This is literal from the Greek," he says, "and I have ventured it," though he quotes Milton's "dogs of hell" to back himself with a precedent. But he cannot quite stand Homer's downright comparison of Ajax to an ass, and speaks of him in gingerly fashion as—

The stow beast with heavy strength endued.

Pope himself thinks the passage "inimitably just and beautiful;" but on the whole, he says, "a translator owes so much to the taste of the age in which he lives as not to make too great a compliment to the former [age]; and this induced me to omit the mention of the word *ass* in the translation." Boileau and Longinus, he tells us, would approve the omission of mean and vulgar words. "Ass" is the vilest word imaginable in English or Latin, but of dignity enough in Greek and Hebrew to be employed "on the most magnificent occasions."

The Homeric phrase is thus often muffled and deadened by Pope's verbiage. Dignity of a kind is gained at the cost of energy. If such changes admit of some apology as an attempt to preserve what is undoubtedly a Homeric characteristic, we must admit that the "dignity" is often false, it rests upon mere mouthung instead of simplicity and directness, and suggests that Pope might have approved the famous emendation "he died in indigent circumstances," for "he died poor." The same weakness is perhaps more annoying when it leads to sins of commission. Pope never scruples to amend Homer by little epigrammatic amplifications, which are characteristic of the contemporary rhetoric. A single illustration of a fault sufficiently notorious will be sufficient. When Nestor, in the eleventh book, rouses Diomed at night, Pope naturally smoothes

down the testy remark of the sleepy warrior ; but he tries to improve Nestor's directions. Nestor tells Diomed, in most direct terms, that the need is great, and that he must go at once and rouse Ajax. In Pope's translation we have—

Each single Greek in this conclusive strife
Stands on the sharpest edge of death or life ;
Yet if my years thy kind regard engage,
Employ thy youth as I employ my age ;
Succeed to these my cares, and rouse the rest ;
He serves me most, who serves his country best.

The false air of epigram which Pope gives to the fourth line is characteristic ; and the concluding tag, which is quite unauthorized, reminds us irresistibly of one of the rhymes which an actor always spouted to the audience by way of winding up an act in the contemporary drama. Such embroidery is profusely applied by Pope wherever he thinks that Homer, like Diomed, is slumbering too deeply. And, of course, that is not the way in which Nestor roused Diomed or Homer keeps his readers awake.

Such faults have been so fully exposed that we need not dwell upon them further. They come to this, that Pope was really a wit of the days of Queen Anne, and saw only that aspect of Homer which was visible to his kind. The poetic mood was not for him a fine frenzy—for good sense must condemn all frenzy—but a deliberate elevation of the bard by high-heeled shoes and a full-bottomed wig. Seas and mountains, being invisible from Button's, could only be described by worn phrases from the Latin grammar. Even his narrative must be full of epigrams to avoid the one deadly sin of dulness, and his language must be decorous even at the price of being sometimes emasculated. But accept these conditions, and

much still remains. After all, a wit was still a human being, and much more nearly related to us than an ancient Greek. Pope's style, when he is at his best, has the merit of being thoroughly alive ; there are no dead masses of useless verbiage ; every excrescence has been carefully pruned away ; slovenly paraphrases and indistinct slurrings over of the meaning have disappeared. He corrected carefully and scrupulously, as his own statement implies, not with a view of transferring as large a portion as possible of his author's meaning to his own verses, but in order to make the versification as smooth and the sense as transparent as possible. We have the pleasure which we receive from really polished oratory ; every point is made to tell ; if the emphasis is too often pointed by some showy antithesis, we are at least never uncertain as to the meaning ; and if the versification is often monotonous, it is articulate and easily caught at first sight. These are the essential merits of good declamation, and it is in the true declamatory passages that Pope is at his best. The speeches of his heroes are often admirable, full of spirit, well balanced and skilfully arranged pieces of rhetoric—not a mere inorganic series of observations. Undoubtedly the warriors are a little too epigrammatic and too consciously didactic ; and we feel almost scandalized when they take to downright blows, as though Walpole and St. John were interrupting a debate in the House of Commons by fisticuffs. They would be better in the senate than the field. But the brilliant rhetoric implies also a sense of dignity which is not mere artificial mouthing. Pope, as it seems to me, rises to a level of sustained eloquence when he has to act as interpreter for the direct expression of broad magnanimous sentiment. Classical critics may explain by what shades of feeling the aristocratic grandeur

of soul of an English noble differed from the analogous quality in heroic Greece, and find the difference reflected in the "grand style" of Pope as compared with that of Homer. But Pope could at least assume with admirable readiness the lofty air of superiority to personal fears and patriotic devotion to a great cause, which is common to the type in every age. His tendency to didactic platitudes is at least out of place in such cases, and his dread of vulgarity and quaintness, with his genuine feeling for breadth of effect, frequently enables him to be really dignified and impressive. It will perhaps be sufficient illustration of these qualities if I conclude these remarks by giving his translation of Hector's speech to Polydamas in the twelfth book, with its famous *εἰς οἰωνὸς ἄριστος ἀμύνεσθαι περὶ πάτρης*.

To him then Hector with disdain return'd ;
 (Fierce as he spoke, his eyes with fury burn'd)—
 Are these the faithful counsels of thy tongue ?
 Thy will is partial, not thy reason wrong ;
 Or if the purpose of thy heart thou sent,
 Sure Heaven resumes the little sense it lent—
 What coward counsels would thy madness move
 Against the word, the will reveal'd of Jove ?
 The leading sign, the irrevocable nod
 And happy thunders of the favouring God ?
 These shall I slight ? And guide my wavering mind
 By wand'ring birds that flit with every wind ?
 Ye vagrants of the sky ! your wings extend
 Or where the suns arise or where descend ;
 To right or left, unheeded take your way,
 While I the dictates of high heaven obey.
 Without a sigh his sword the brave man draws,
 And asks no omen but his country's cause.
 But why should'st thou suspect the war's success ?
 None fears it more, as none promotes it less.
 Tho' all our ships amid yon ships expire,
 Trust thy own cowardice to escape the fire.

Troy and her sons may find a general grave,
But thou canst live, for thou canst be a slave.
Yet should the fears that wary mind suggests
Spread their cold poison through our soldiers' breasts,
My javelin can revenge so base a part,
And free the soul that quivers in thy heart.

The six volumes of the *Iliad* were published during the years 1715-1720, and were closed by a dedication to Congreve, who, as an eminent man of letters, not too closely connected with either Whigs or Tories, was the most appropriate recipient of such a compliment. Pope was enriched by his success, and no doubt wearied by his labours. But his restless intellect would never leave him to indulge in prolonged repose, and, though not avaricious, he was not more averse than other men to increasing his fortune. He soon undertook two sufficiently laborious works. The first was an edition of Shakspeare, for which he only received 217*l.* 10*s.*, and which seems to have been regarded as a failure. It led, like his other publications, to a quarrel to be hereafter mentioned, but need not detain us at present. It appeared in 1725, when he was already deep in another project. The success of the *Iliad* naturally suggested an attempt upon the *Odyssey*. Pope, however, was tired of translating, and he arranged for assistance. He took into alliance a couple of Cambridge men who were small poets capable of fairly adopting his versification. One of them was William Broome, a clergyman who held several livings and married a rich widow. Unfortunately his independence did not restrain him from writing poetry, for which want of means would have been the only sufficient excuse. He was a man of some classical attainments, and had helped Pope in compiling notes to the *Iliad* from

Eustathius, an author whom Pope would have been scarcely able to read without such assistance. Elijah Fenton, his other assistant, was a Cambridge man who had sacrificed his claims of preferment by becoming a non-juror, and picked up a living partly by writing and chiefly by acting as tutor to Lord Orrery, and afterwards in the family of Trumball's widow. Pope, who introduced him to Lady Trumball, had also introduced him to Craggs, who, when Secretary of State, felt his want of a decent education, and wished to be polished by some competent person. He seems to have been a kindly, idle, honourable man, who died, says Pope, of indolence, and more immediately, it appears, of the gout. The alliance thus formed was rather a delicate one, and was embittered by some of Pope's usual trickery. In issuing his proposals he spoke in ambiguous terms of two friends who were to render him some undefined assistance, and did not claim to be the translator, but to have undertaken the translation. The assistants, in fact, did half the work, Broome translating eight, and Fenton four, out of the twenty-four books. Pope was unwilling to acknowledge the full amount of their contributions; he persuaded Broome—a weak, good-natured man—to set his hand to a postscript to the *Odyssey*, in which only three books are given to Broome himself, and only two to Fenton. When Pope was attacked for passing off other people's verses as his own, he boldly appealed to this statement to prove that he had only received Broome's help in three books, and at the same time stated the whole amount which he had paid for the eight, as though it had been paid for the three. When Broome, in spite of his subservience, became a little restive under this treatment, Pope indirectly admitted the truth by claiming only

twelve books in an advertisement to his works, and in a note to the *Dunciad*, but did not explicitly retract the other statement. Broome could not effectively rebuke his fellow-sinner. He had, in fact, conspired with Pope to attract the public by the use of the most popular name, and could not even claim his own afterwards. He had, indeed, talked too much, according to Pope; and the poet's morality is oddly illustrated in a letter, in which he complains of Broome's indiscretion for letting out the secret; and explains that, as the facts are so far known, it would now be "unjust and dishonourable" to continue the concealment. It would be impossible to accept more frankly the theory that lying is wrong when it is found out. Meanwhile Pope's conduct to his victims or accomplices was not over-generous. He made over 3500*l.* after paying Broome 500*l.* (including 100*l.* for notes) and Fenton 200*l.*, that is, 50*l.* a book. The rate of pay was as high as the work was worth, and as much as it would fetch in the open market. The large sum was entirely due to Pope's reputation, though obtained, so far as the true authorship was concealed, upon something like false pretences. Still, we could have wished that he had been a little more liberal with his share of the plunder. A coolness ensued between the principal and his partners in consequence of these questionable dealings. Fenton seems never to have been reconciled to Pope, though they did not openly quarrel and Pope wrote a laudatory epitaph for him on his death in 1730. Broome—a weaker man—though insulted by Pope in the *Dunciad* and the *Miscellanies*, accepted a reconciliation, for which Pope seems to have been eager, perhaps feeling some touch of remorse for the injuries which he had inflicted.

The shares of the three colleagues in the *Odyssey* are

not to be easily distinguished by internal evidence. On trying the experiment by a cursory reading I confess (though a critic does not willingly admit his fallibility) that I took some of Broome's work for Pope's, and, though closer study or an acuter perception might discriminate more accurately, I do not think that the distinction would be easy. This may be taken to confirm the common theory that Pope's versification was a mere mechanical trick. Without admitting this, it must be admitted that the external characteristics of his manner were easily caught; and that it was not hard for a clever versifier to produce something closely resembling his inferior work, especially when following the same original. But it may be added that Pope's *Odyssey* was really inferior to the *Iliad*, both because his declamatory style is more out of place in its romantic narrative, and because he was weary and languid, and glad to turn his fame to account without more labour than necessary. The *Odyssey*, I may say, in conclusion, led to one incidental advantage. It was criticized by Spence, a mild and cultivated scholar, who was professor of poetry at Oxford. His observations, according to Johnson, were candid, though not indicative of a powerful mind. Pope, he adds, had in Spence, the first experience of a critic "who censured with respect and praised with alacrity." Pope made Spence's acquaintance, recommended him to patrons, and was repaid by warm admiration.

CHAPTER IV.

POPE AT TWICKENHAM.

WHEN Pope finished his translation of the Iliad, he was congratulated by his friend Gay in a pleasant copy of verses marked by the usual *bonhomie* of the fat kindly man. Gay supposes himself to be welcoming his friend on the return from his long expedition.

Did I not see thee when thou first sett'st sail,
To seek adventures fair in Homer's land ?
Did I not see thy sinking spirits fail,
And wish thy bark had never left the strand ?
Even in mid ocean often didst thou quail,
And oft lift up thy holy eye and hand,
Praying to virgin dear and saintly choir
Back to the port to bring thy bark entire.

And now the bark is sailing up the Thames, with bells ringing, bonfires blazing, and "bones and cleavers" clashing. So splendid a show suggests Lord Mayor's Day, but in fact it is only the crowd of Pope's friends come to welcome him on his successful achievement; and a long catalogue follows, in which each is indicated by some appropriate epithet. The list includes some doubtful sympathizers, such as Gildon, who comes "hearing thou hast riches," and even Dennis, who in fact continued to growl out criticisms against the triumphant poet. Steele, too, and Tickell, —

Whose skiff (in partnership they say)
Set forth for Greece but founder'd on the way,

would not applaud very cordially. Addison, their common hero, was beyond the reach of satire or praise. Parnell, who had contributed a life of Homer, died in 1718; and Rowe and Garth, sound Whigs, but friends and often boon companions of the little papist, had followed. Swift was breathing "Bœotian air" in his deanery, and St. John was "confined to foreign climates" for very sufficient reasons. Any such roll-call of friends must show melancholy gaps, and sometimes the gaps are more significant than the names. Yet Pope could boast of a numerous body of men, many of them of high distinction, who were ready to give him a warm welcome. There were, indeed, few eminent persons of the time, either in the political or literary worlds, with whom this sensitive and restless little invalid did not come into contact, hostile or friendly, at some part of his career. His friendships were keen and his hostilities more than proportionally bitter. We see his fragile figure, glancing rapidly from one hospitable circle to another, but always standing a little apart; now paying court to some conspicuous wit, or philosopher, or statesman, or beauty; now taking deadly offence for some utterly inexplicable reason; writhing with agony under clumsy blows which a robust nature would have met with contemptuous laughter; racking his wits to contrive exquisite compliments, and suddenly exploding in sheer Billingsgate; making a mountain of every mole-hill in his pilgrimage; always preoccupied with his last literary project, and yet finding time for innumerable intrigues; for carrying out schemes of vengeance for wounded vanity, and for introducing himself into every quarrel that was going on around him.

In all his multifarious schemes and occupations he found it convenient to cover himself by elaborate mystifications, and was as anxious (it would seem) to deceive posterity as to impose upon contemporaries; and hence it is as difficult clearly to disentangle the twisted threads of his complex history as to give an intelligible picture of the result of the investigation. The publication of the *Iliad*, however, marks a kind of central point in his history. Pope has reached independence, and become the acknowledged head of the literary world; and it will be convenient here to take a brief survey of his position, before following out two or three different series of events, which can scarcely be given in chronological order. Pope, when he first came to town and followed Wycherley about like a dog, had tried to assume the airs of a rake. The same tone is adopted in many of his earlier letters. At Binfield he became demure, correct, and respectful to the religious scruples of his parents. In his visits to London and Bath he is little better than one of the wicked. In a copy of verses (not too decent) written in 1715, as a "Farewell to London," he gives us to understand that he has been hearing the chimes at midnight, and knows where the bona-robas dwell. He is forced to leave his jovial friends and his worrying publishers "for Homer (damn him !) calls." He is, so he assures us,

Still idle, with a busy air
Deep whimsies to contrive;
The gayest valetudinaire,
Most thinking rake alive.

And he takes a sad leave of London pleasures.

Luxurious lobster nights, farewell,
For sober, studious days!
And Burlington's delicious meal
For salads, tarts, and pease

Writing from Bath a little earlier, to Teresa and Martha Blount, he employs the same jaunty strain. "Every one," he says, "values Mr. Pope, but every one for a different reason. One for his adherence to the Catholic faith, another for his neglect of Popish superstition; one for his good behaviour, another for his whimsicalities; Mr. Titcomb for his pretty atheistical jests; Mr. Caryl for his moral and Christian sentences; Mrs. Teresa for his reflections on Mrs. Patty; Mrs. Patty for his reflections on Mrs. Teresa." He is an "agreeable rattle;" the accomplished rake, drinking with the wits, though above boozing with the squire, and capable of alleging his drunkenness as an excuse for writing very questionable letters to ladies.

Pope was too sickly and too serious to indulge long in such youthful fopperies. He had no fund of high spirits to draw upon, and his playfulness was too near deadly earnest for the comedy of common life. He had too much intellect to be a mere fribble, and had not the strong animal passions of the thorough debauchee. Age came upon him rapidly, and he had sown his wild oats, such as they were, while still a young man. Meanwhile his reputation and his circle of acquaintances were rapidly spreading, and in spite of all his disqualifications for the coarser forms of conviviality, he took the keenest possible interest in the life that went on around him. A satirist may not be a pleasant companion, but he must frequent society; he must be on the watch for his natural prey; he must describe the gossip of the day, for it is the raw material from which he spins his finished fabric. Pope, as his writings show, was an eager recipient of all current rumours, whether they affected his aristocratic friends or the humble denizens of Grub Street. Fully to

elucidate his poems, a commentator requires to have at his finger's ends the whole *chronique scandaleuse* of the day. With such tastes, it was natural that, as the subscriptions for his Homer began to pour in, he should be anxious to move nearer the great social centre. London itself might be too exciting for his health and too destructive of literary leisure. Accordingly, in 1716, the little property at Binfield was sold, and the Pope family moved to Mawson's New Buildings, on the bank of the river at Chiswick, and "under the wing of my Lord Burlington." He seems to have been a little ashamed of the residence; the name of it is certainly neither aristocratic nor poetical. Two years later, on the death of his father, he moved up the river to the villa at Twickenham, which has always been associated with his name, and was his home for the last twenty-five years of his life. There he had the advantage of being just on the boundary of the great world. He was within easy reach of Hampton Court, Richmond, and Kew; places which, during Pope's residence, were frequently glorified by the presence of George II. and his heir and natural enemy, Frederick, Prince of Wales. Pope, indeed, did not enjoy the honour of any personal interview with royalty. George is said to have called him a very honest man after reading his *Dunciad*, but Pope's references to his Sovereign were not complimentary. There was a report, referred to by Swift, that Pope had purposely avoided a visit from Queen Caroline. He was on very friendly terms with Mrs. Howard—afterwards Lady Suffolk—the powerless mistress, who was intimate with two of his chief friends, Bathurst and Peterborough, and who settled at Marble Villa, in Twickenham. Pope and Bathurst helped to lay out her grounds, and she stayed there to become a friendly neighbour of Horace Wal-

pole, who, unluckily for lovers of gossip, did not become a Twickenhamite until three years after Pope's death. Pope was naturally more allied with the Prince of Wales, who occasionally visited him, and became intimate with the band of patriots and enthusiasts who saw in the heir to the throne the coming "patriot king." Bolingbroke, too, the great inspirer of the opposition, and Pope's most revered friend, was for ten years at Dawley, within an easy drive. London was easily accessible by road and by the river which bounded his lawn. His waterman appears to have been one of the regular members of his household. There he had every opportunity for the indulgence of his favourite tastes. The villa was on one of the loveliest reaches of the Thames, not yet polluted by the encroachments of London. The house itself was destroyed in the beginning of this century ; and the garden (if we may trust Horace Walpole) had been previously spoilt. This garden, says Walpole, was a little bit of ground of five acres, enclosed by three lanes. "Pope had twisted and twirled and rhymed and harmonized this, till it appeared two or three sweet little lawns, opening and opening beyond one another, and the whole surrounded with impenetrable woods." These, it appears, were hacked and hewed into mere desolation by the next proprietor. Pope was, indeed, an ardent lover of the rising art of landscape gardening ; he was familiar with Bridgeman and Kent, the great authorities of the time, and his example and precepts helped to promote the development of a less formal style. His theories are partly indicated in the description of Timon's villa.

His gardens next your admiration call
On every side you look, behold the wall !

No pleasing intricacies intervene,
No artful wildness to perplex the scene ;
Grove nods at grove, each alley has a brother,
And half the platform just reflects the other

Pope's taste, indeed, tolerated various old-fashioned excrescences which we profess to despise. He admired mock classical temples and obelisks erected judiciously at the ends of vistas. His most famous piece of handiwork, the grotto at Twickenham, still remains, and is in fact a short tunnel under the high road to connect his grounds with the lawn which slopes to the river. He describes in a letter to one of his friends, his "temple wholly comprised of shells in the rustic manner," and his famous grotto so provided with mirrors that when the doors are shut it becomes a camera obscura, reflecting hills, river, and boats, and when lighted up glitters with rays reflected from bits of looking glass in angular form. His friends pleased him by sending pieces of spar from the mines of Cornwall and Derbyshire, petrifications, marble, coral, crystals, and humming birds' nests. It was in fact a gorgeous example of the kind of architecture with which the wit delighted to adorn his country box. The hobby, whether in good taste or not, gave Pope never-ceasing amusement ; and he wrote some characteristic verses in its praise.

In his grotto, as he declares in another place, he could sit in peace with his friends, undisturbed by the distant din of the world.

There my retreat the best companions grace,
Chiefs out of war, and statesmen out of place ;
There St. John mingles with my friendly bowl
The feast of reason and the flow of soul ;
And he whose lightning pierced the Iberian lines
Now forms my quincunx and now ranks my vines.

Or tames the genius of the stubborn plain
Almost as quickly as he conquer'd Spain.

The grotto, one would fear, was better fitted for frogs than for philosophers capable of rheumatic twinges. But deducting what we please from such utterances on the score of affectation, the picture of Pope amusing himself with his grotto and his plantations, directing old John Searle, his gardener, and conversing with the friends whom he compliments so gracefully, is, perhaps, the pleasantest in his history. He was far too restless and too keenly interested in society and literature to resign himself permanently to any such retreat.

Pope's constitutional irritability kept him constantly on the wing. Though little interested in politics, he liked to be on the edge of any political commotion. He appeared in London on the death of Queen Caroline, in 1737 ; and Bathurst remarked that "he was as sure to be there in a bustle as a porpoise in a storm." "Our friend Pope," said Jervas not long before, "is off and on, here and there, everywhere and nowhere, *à son ordinaire*, and, therefore as well as we can hope for a carcass so crazy." The Twickenham villa, though nominally dedicated to repose, became of course a centre of attraction for the interviewers of the day. The opening lines of the Prologue to the Satires give a vivacious description of the crowds of authors who rushed to "Twitnam," to obtain his patronage or countenance, in a day when editors were not the natural scapegoats of such aspirants.

What walls can guard me, or what shades can hide ?
They pierce my thickets, through my grot they glide ;
By land, by water, they renew the charge ;
They stop the chariot and they board the barge :
No place is sacred, not the church is free,
E'en Sunday shines no Sabbath-day to me.

And even at an earlier period he occasionally retreated from the bustle to find time for his Homer. Lord Harcourt, the Chancellor in the last years of Queen Anne, allowed him to take up his residence in his old house of Stanton Harcourt, in Oxfordshire. He inscribed on a pane of glass in an upper room, "In the year 1718 Alexander Pope finished here the fifth volume of Homer." In his earlier days he was often rambling about on horseback. A letter from Jervas gives the plan of one such jaunt (in 1715) with Arbuthnot and Disney for companions. Arbuthnot is to be commander-in-chief, and allows only a shirt and a cravat to be carried in each traveller's pocket. They are to make a moderate journey each day, and stay at the houses of various friends, ending ultimately at Bath. Another letter of about the same date describes a ride to Oxford, in which Pope is overtaken by his publisher, Lintot, who lets him into various secrets of the trade, and proposes that Pope should turn an ode of Horace whilst sitting under the trees to rest. "Lord, if you pleased, what a clever miscellany might you make at leisure hours!" exclaims the man of business; and though Pope laughed at the advice, we might fancy that he took it to heart. He always had bits of verse on the anvil, ready to be hammered and polished at any moment. But even Pope could not be always writing, and the mere mention of these rambles suggests pleasant lounging through old world country lanes of the quiet century. We think of the road-side life seen by Parson Adams or Humphry Clucker, and of which Mr. Borrow caught the last glimpse when dwelling in the tents of the Romany. In later days Pope had to put his "crazy carcase" into a carriage, and occasionally came in for less pleasant experiences. Whilst driving home one

night from Dawley, in Bolingbroke's carriage and six, he was upset in a stream. He escaped drowning, though the water was "up to the knots of his periwig," but he was so cut by the broken glass that he nearly lost the use of his right hand. On another occasion Spence was delighted by the sudden appearance of the poet at Oxford, "dreadfully fatigued;" he had good-naturedly lent his own chariot to a lady who had been hurt in an upset, and had walked three miles to Oxford on a sultry day.

A man of such brilliant wit, familiar with so many social circles, should have been a charming companion. It must, however, be admitted that the accounts which have come down to us do not confirm such preconceived impressions. Like his great rival, Addison, though for other reasons, he was generally disappointing in society. Pope, as may be guessed from Spence's reports, had a large fund of interesting literary talk, such as youthful aspirants to fame would be delighted to receive with reverence; he had the reputation for telling anecdotes skilfully, and we may suppose that when he felt at ease, with a respectful and safe companion, he could do himself justice. But he must have been very trying to his hosts. He could seldom lay aside his self-consciousness sufficiently to write an easy letter; and the same fault probably spoilt his conversation. Swift complains of him as a silent and inattentive companion. He went to sleep at his own table, says Johnson, when the Prince of Wales was talking poetry to him—certainly a severe trial. He would, we may guess, be silent till he had something to say worthy of the great Pope, and would then doubt whether it was not wise to treasure it up for preservation in a couplet. His sister declared that she had never seen him laugh heartily; and Spence, who records the saying,

is surprised, because Pope was said to have been very lively in his youth; but admits that in later years he never went beyond a "particular easy smile." A hearty laugh would have sounded strangely from the touchy, moody, intriguing little man, who could "hardly drink tea without a stratagem." His sensitiveness, indeed, appearing by his often weeping when he read moving passages; but we can hardly imagine him as ever capable of genial self-abandonment.

His unsocial habits, indeed, were a natural consequence of ill-health. He never seems to have been thoroughly well for many days together. He implied no more than the truth when he speaks of his Muse as helping him through that "long disease, his life." Writing to Bathurst in 1728, he says that he does not expect to enjoy any health for four days together; and, not long after, Bathurst remonstrates with him for his carelessness, asking him whether it is not enough to have the headache for four days in the week and be sick for the other three. It is no small proof of intellectual energy that he managed to do so much thorough work under such disadvantages, and his letters show less of the invalid's querulous spirit than we might well have pardoned. Johnson gives a painful account of his physical defects, on the authority of an old servant of Lord Oxford, who frequently saw him in his later years. He was so weak as to be unable to rise to dress himself without help. He was so sensitive to cold that he had to wear a kind of fur doublet under a coarse linen shirt; one of his sides was contracted, and he could scarcely stand upright till he was laced into a boddice made of stiff canvas; his legs were so slender that he had to wear three pairs of stockings, which he was unable to draw on and off

without help. His seat had to be raised to bring him to a level with common tables. In one of his papers in the *Guardian* he describes himself apparently as Dick Distich : "a lively little creature, with long legs and arms ; a spider¹ is no ill emblem of him ; he has been taken at a distance for a small windmill." His face, says Johnson, was "not displeasing," and the portraits are eminently characteristic. The thin, drawn features wear the expression of habitual pain, but are brightened up by the vivid and penetrating eye, which seems to be the characteristic poetical beauty.

It was after all a gallant spirit which got so much work out of this crazy carcase, and kept it going, spite of all its feebleness, for fifty-six years. The servant whom Johnson quotes, said that she was called from her bed four times in one night, "in the dreadful winter of Forty," to supply him with paper, lest he should lose a thought. His constitution was already breaking down, but the intellect was still striving to save every moment allowed to him. His friends laughed at his habit of scribbling upon odd bits of paper. "Paper-sparing" Pope is the epithet bestowed upon him by Swift, and a great part of the *Iliad* is written upon the backs of letters. The habit seems to have been regarded as illustrative of his economical habits ; but it was also natural to a man who was on the watch to turn every fragment of time to account. If anything was to be finished, he must snatch at the brief intervals allowed by his many infirmities. Naturally, he fell into many of the self-indulgent and troublesome ways of the valetudinarian. He was constantly wanting coffee, which seems to have soothed his headaches ; and

¹ The same comparison is made by Cibber in a rather unsavoury passage.

for this and his other wants he used to wear out the servants in his friends' houses, by "frequent and frivolous errands." Yet he was apparently a kind master. His servants lived with him till they became friends, and he took care to pay so well the unfortunate servant whose sleep was broken by his calls, that she said that she would want no wages in a family where she had to wait upon Mr. Pope. Another form of self-indulgence was more injurious to himself. He pampered his appetite with highly seasoned dishes, and liked to receive delicacies from his friends. His death was imputed by some of his friends, says Johnson, to "a silver saucepan in which it was his delight to eat potted lampreys." He would always get up for dinner, in spite of headache, when told that this delicacy was provided. Yet, as Johnson also observes, the excesses cannot have been very great, as they did not sooner cut short so fragile an existence. "Two bites and a sup more than your stint," says Swift, "will cost you more than others pay for a regular debauch."

At home, indeed, he appears to have been generally abstemious. Probably the habits of his parents' little household were very simple, and Pope, like Swift, knew the value of independence well enough to be systematically economical. Swift, indeed, had a more generous heart, and a lordly indifference to making money by his writings, which Pope, who owed his fortune chiefly to his Homer, did not attempt to rival. Swift alludes in his letters to an anecdote, which we may hope does not represent his habitual practice. Pope, it appears, was entertaining a couple of friends, and when four glasses had been consumed from a pint, retired, saying, "Gentlemen I leave you to your wine." I tell that story to everybody, says Swift, "in commendation of Mr. Pope's abstemiousness,"

but he tells it, one may guess, with something of a rueful countenance. At times, however, it seems that Pope could give a "splendid dinner," and show no want of the "skill and elegance which such performances require." Pope, in fact, seems to have shown a combination of qualities which is not uncommon, though sometimes called inconsistent. He valued money, as a man values it who has been poor and feels it essential to his comfort to be fairly beyond the reach of want, and was accordingly pretty sharp at making a bargain with a publisher or in arranging terms with a collaborator. But he could also be liberal on occasion. Johnson says that his whole income amounted to about 800*l.* a year, out of which he professed himself able to assign 100*l.* to charity; and though the figures are doubtful, and all Pope's statements about his own proceedings liable to suspicion, he appears to have been often generous in helping the distressed with money, as well as with advice or recommendations to his powerful friends. Pope, by his infirmities and his talents, belonged to the dependent class of mankind. He was in no sense capable of standing firmly upon his own legs. He had a longing, sometimes pathetic and sometimes humiliating, for the applause of his fellows and the sympathy of friends. With feelings so morbidly sensitive, and with such a lamentable incapacity for straightforward openness in any relation of life, he was naturally a dangerous companion. He might be brooding over some fancied injury or neglect, and meditating revenge, when he appeared to be on good terms; when really desiring to do a service to a friend, he might adopt some tortuous means for obtaining his ends, which would convert the service into an injury; and, if he had once become alienated, the past friendship would be remem-

bered by him as involving a kind of humiliation, and therefore supplying additional keenness to his resentment. And yet it is plain that throughout life he was always anxious to lean upon some stronger nature; to have a sturdy supporter whom he was too apt to turn into an accomplice; or at least to have some good-natured, easy-going companion, in whose society he might find repose for his tortured nerves. And therefore, though the story of his friendships is unfortunately intertwined with the story of bitter quarrels and indefensible acts of treachery, it also reveals a touching desire for the kind of consolation which would be most valuable to one so accessible to the pettiest stings of his enemies. He had many warm friends, moreover, who, by good fortune or the exercise of unusual prudence, never excited his wrath, and whom he repaid by genuine affection. Some of these friendships have become famous, and will be best noticed in connexion with passages in his future career. It will be sufficient if I here notice a few names, in order to show that a complete picture of Pope's life, if it could now be produced, would include many figures of which we only catch occasional glimpses.

Pope, as I have said, though most closely connected with the Tories and Jacobites, disclaimed any close party connexion, and had some relations with the Whigs. Some courtesies even passed between him and the great Sir Robert Walpole, whose interest in literature was a vanishing quantity, and whose bitterest enemies were Pope's greatest friends. Walpole, however, as we have seen, asked for preferment for Pope's old friend, and Pope repaid him with more than one compliment. Thus, in the Epilogue to the Satires, he says,—

Seen him I have, but in his happier hour
Of social pleasure, ill exchanged for power.
Seen him, uncumber'd with the venal tribe,
Smile without art and win without a bribe.

Another Whig statesman for whom Pope seems to have entertained an especially warm regard was James Craggs, Addison's successor as Secretary of State, who died whilst under suspicion of speculation in the South Sea business (1721). The Whig connexion might have been turned to account. Craggs during his brief tenure of office offered Pope a pension of 300*l.* a year (from the secret service money), which Pope declined, whilst saying that, if in want of money, he would apply to Craggs as a friend. A negotiation of the same kind took place with Halifax, who aimed at the glory of being the great literary patron. It seems that he was anxious to have the *Homer* dedicated to him, and Pope, being unwilling to gratify him, or, as Johnson says, being less eager for money than Halifax for praise, sent a cool answer, and the negotiation passed off. Pope afterwards revenged himself for this offence by his bitter satire on *Bufo* in the Prologue to his *Satires*, though he had not the courage to admit its obvious application.

Pope deserves the credit of preserving his independence. He would not stoop low enough to take a pension at the price virtually demanded by the party in power. He was not, however, inaccessible to aristocratic blandishments, and was proud to be the valued and petted guest in many great houses. Through Swift he had become acquainted with Oxford, the colleague of Bolingbroke, and was a frequent and intimate guest of the second Earl, from whose servant Johnson derived the curious information as to his habits. Harcourt, Oxford's Chancellor, lent him a house

whilst translating Homer. Sheshall, the Duke of Buckingham, had been an early patron, and after the duke's death, Pope, at the request of his eccentric duchess, the illegitimate daughter of James II., edited some of his works and got into trouble for some Jacobite phrases contained in them. His most familiar friend among the opposition magnates was Lord Bathurst, a man of uncommon vivacity and good-humour. He was born four years before Pope, and died more than thirty years later at the age of ninety-one. One of the finest passages in Burke's American speeches turns upon the vast changes which had taken place during Bathurst's lifetime. He lived to see his son Chancellor. Two years before his death the son left the father's dinner-table with some remark upon the advantage of regular habits. "Now the old gentleman's gone," said the lively youth of eighty-nine to the remaining guests, "let's crack the other bottle." Bathurst delighted in planting, and Pope in giving him advice, and in discussing the opening of vistas and erection of temples, and the poet was apt to be vexed when his advice was not taken.

Another friend, even more restless and comet-like in his appearances, was the famous Peterborough, the man who had seen more kings and postillions than any one in Europe, of whom Walsh injudiciously remarked that he had too much wit to be entrusted with the command of an army; and whose victories soon after the unlucky remark had been made, were so brilliant as to resemble strategic diagrams. Pope seems to have been dazzled by the amazing vivacity of the man, and has left a curious description of his last days. Pope found him on the eve of the voyage in which he died, sick of an agonizing disease, crying out for pain at night, fainting away twice in the morning, lying like a dead man for a time, and in the intervals of pain giving a dinner

to ten people, laughing, talking, declaiming against the corruption of the times, giving directions to his workmen, and insisting upon going to sea in a yacht without preparations for landing anywhere in particular. Pope seems to have been specially attracted by such men, with intellects as restless as his own, but with infinitely more vitality to stand the consequent wear and tear.

We should be better pleased if we could restore a vivid image of the inner circle upon which his happiness most intimately depended. In one relation of life Pope's conduct was not only blameless, but thoroughly loveable. He was, it is plain, the best of sons. Even here, it is true, he is a little too consciously virtuous. Yet when he speaks of his father and mother there are tears in his voice, and it is impossible not to recognize genuine warmth of heart.

Me let the tender office long engage
To rock the cradle of reposing ago,
With lenient arts extend a mother's breath,
Make languor smile, and soothe the bed of death,
Explore the thought, explain the asking eye,
And keep awhile one parent from the sky!²

Such verses are a spring in the desert, a gush of the true feeling, which contrasts with the strained and factitious sentiment in his earlier rhetoric, and almost forces us to love the writer. Could Pope have preserved that higher mood, he would have held our affections as he often delights our intellect.

Unluckily we can catch but few glimpses of Pope's family life; of the old mother and father and the affec-

² It is curious to compare these verses with the original copy contained in a letter to Aaron Hill. The comparison shows how skilfully Pope polished his most successful passages.

tionate nurse, who lived with him till 1721, and died during a dangerous illness of his mother's. The father, of whom we hear little after his early criticism of the son's bad "rhymes," died in 1717, and a brief note to Martha Blount gives Pope's feeling as fully as many pages: "My poor father died last night. Believe, since I don't forget you this moment, I never shall." The mother survived till 1733, tenderly watched by Pope, who would never be long absent from her, and whose references to her are uniformly tender and beautiful. One or two of her letters are preserved. "My Deare, — A letter from your sister just now is come and gone, Mr. Mennoek and Charls Rackitt, to take his love of us; but being nothing in it, doe not send it. . . . Your sister is very well, but your brother is not. There's Mr. Blunt of Maypell Dunom is dead, the same day that Mr. Inglefield died. My servis to Mia. Blounts, and all that ask of me. I hope to here from you, and that you are well, which is my dalye prayers; this with my blessing." The old lady had peculiar views of orthography, and Pope, it is said, gave her the pleasure of copying out some of his Homer, though the necessary corrections gave him and the printers more trouble than would be saved by such an amanuensis. Three days after her death he wrote to Richardson, the painter. "I thank God," he says, "her death was as easy as her life was innocent; and as it cost her not a groan, nor even a sigh, there is yet upon her countenance such an expression of tranquillity, nay, almost of pleasure, that it is even enviable to behold it. It would afford the finest image of a saint expired that ever painter drew, and it would be the greatest obligation which ever that obliging art could ever bestow upon a friend, if you would come and sketch it for me. I am sure if there be no very

prevalent obstacle, you will leave any common business to do this, and I shall hope to see you this evening as late as you will, or to-morrow morning as early, before this winter flower is faded." Swift's comment, on hearing the news, gives the only consolation which Pope could have felt. "She died in extreme old age," he writes, "without pain, under the care of the most dutiful son I have ever known or heard of, which is a felicity not happening to one in a million." And with her death, its most touching and ennobling influence faded from Pope's life. There is no particular merit in loving a mother, but few biographies give a more striking proof that the loving discharge of a common duty may give a charm to a whole character. It is melancholy to add that we often have to appeal to this part of his story, to assure ourselves that Pope was really deserving of some affection.

The part of Pope's history which naturally follows brings us again to the region of unsolved mysteries. The one prescription which a spiritual physician would have suggested in Pope's case would have been the love of a good and sensible woman. A nature so capable of tender feeling and so essentially dependent upon others, might have been at once soothed and supported by a happy domestic life ; though it must be admitted that it would have required no common qualifications in a wife to calm so irritable and jealous a spirit. Pope was unfortunate in his surroundings. The bachelor society of that day, not only the society of the Wycherleys and Cromwells, but the more virtuous society of Addison and his friends, was certainly not remarkable for any exalted tone about women. Bolingbroke, Peterborough, and Bathurst, Pope's most admired friends, were all more or less flagrantly licentious ; and Swift's mysterious story shows

that if he could love a woman, his love might be as dangerous as hatred. In such a school, Pope, eminently malleable to the opinions of his companions, was not likely to acquire a high standard of sentiment. His personal defects were equally against him. His frame was not adapted for the robust gallantry of the time. He wanted a nurse rather than a wife; and if his infirmities might excite pity, pity is akin to contempt as well as to love. The poor little invalid, brutally abused for his deformity by such men as Dennis and his friends, was stung beyond all self-control by their coarse laughter, and by the consciousness that it only echoed, in a more brutal shape, the judgment of the fine ladies of the time. His language about women, sometimes expressing coarse contempt and sometimes rising to ferocity, is the reaction of his morbid sensibility under such real and imagined scorn.

Such feelings must be remembered in speaking briefly of two love affairs, if they are such, which profoundly affected his happiness. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu is amongst the most conspicuous figures of the time. She had been made a toast at the Kiteat Club at the age of eight, and she translated Epictetus (from the Latin) before she was twenty. She wrote verses, some of them amazingly coarse, though decidedly clever, and had married Mr. Edward Wortley Montagu in defiance of her father's will, though even in this, her most romantic proceeding, there are curious indications of a respect for prudential considerations. Her husband was a friend of Addison's, and a Whig; and she accompanied him on an embassy to Constantinople in 1716-17, where she wrote the excellent letters published after her death, and whence she imported the practice of inoculation in spite of much opposition. A distinguished leader of society, she was also a woman of

shrewd intellect and masculine character. In 1739 she left her husband, though no quarrel preceded or followed the separation, and settled for many years in Italy. Her letters are characteristic of the keen woman of the world, with an underlying vein of nobler feeling, perverted by harsh experience into a prevailing cynicism. Pope had made her acquaintance before she left England. He wrote poems to her and corrected her verses till she cruelly refused his services, on the painfully plausible ground that he would claim all the good for himself and leave all the bad for her. They corresponded during her first absence abroad. The common sense is all on the lady's side, whilst Pope puts on his most elaborate manners and addresses her in the strained compliments of old-fashioned gallantry. He acts the lover, though it is obviously mere acting, and his language is stained by indelicacies, which could scarcely offend Lady Mary, if we may judge her by her own poetical attempts. The most characteristic of Pope's letters related to an incident at Stanton Harcourt. Two rustic lovers were surprised by a thunderstorm in a field near the house; they were struck by lightning, and found lying dead in each other's arms. Here was an admirable chance for Pope, who was staying in the house with his friend Gay. He wrote off a beautiful letter to Lady Mary,³ descriptive of the event—a true prose pastoral in the Strephon and Chloe style. He got Lord Harcourt to erect a monument over the common grave of the lovers,

³ Pope, after his quarrel, wanted to sink his previous intimacy with Lady Mary, and printed this letter as addressed by Gay to Fortescue, adding one to the innumerable mystifications of his correspondence. Mr. Moy Thomas doubts also whether Lady Mary's answer was really sent at the assigned date. The contrast of sentiment is equally characteristic in any case.

and composed a couple of epitaphs, which he submitted to Lady Mary's opinion. She replied by a cruel dose of common sense, and a dogged epitaph, which turned his fine phrases into merciless ridicule. If the lovers had been spared, she suggests, the first year might probably have seen a beaten wife and a deceived husband, cursing their marriage chain.

Now they are happy in their doom,
For Pope has writ upon their tomb

On Lady Mary's return the intimacy was continued. She took a house at Twickenham. He got Kneller to paint her portrait, and wrote letters expressive of humble adoration. But the tone which did well enough when the pair were separated by the whole breadth of Europe, was less suitable when they were in the same parish. After a time the intimacy faded and changed into mutual antipathy. The specific cause of the quarrel, if cause there was, has not been clearly revealed. One account, said to come from Lady Mary, is at least not intrinsically⁴ improbable. According to this story, the unfortunate poet forgot for a moment that he was a contemptible cripple, and forgot also the existence of Mr. Edward Wortley Montagu, and a passionate declaration of love drew from the lady an "immoderate fit of laughter." Ever afterwards, it is added, he was her implacable enemy. Doubtless, if the story be true, Lady Mary acted like a sensible woman of the world, and Pope was silly as well as immoral. And yet one cannot refuse some pity to the

⁴ Mr. Moy Thomas, in his edition of Lady Mary's letters, considers this story to be merely an echo of old scandal, and makes a different conjecture as to the immediate cause of quarrel. His conjecture seems very improbable to me, but the declaration story is clearly of very doubtful authenticity.

unfortunate wretch, thus roughly jerked back into the consciousness that a fine lady might make a pretty plaything of him, but could not seriously regard him with anything but scorn. Whatever the precise facts, a breach of some sort might have been anticipated. A game of gallantry in which the natural parts are inverted, and the gentleman acts the sentimentalist to the lady's performance of the shrewd cynic, is likely to have awkward results. Pope brooded over his resentment, and years afterwards took a revenge only too characteristic. The first of his Imitations of Horace appeared in 1733. It contained a couplet, too gross for quotation, making the most outrageous imputation upon the character of "Sappho." Now, the accusation itself had no relation whatever either to facts or even (as I suppose) to any existing scandal. It was simply throwing filth at random. Thus, when Lady Mary took it to herself, and applied to Pope through Peterborough for an explanation, Pope could make a defence verbally impregnable. There was no reason why Lady Mary should fancy that such a cap fitted; and it was far more appropriate, as he added, to other women notorious for immorality as well as authorship. In fact, however, there can be no doubt that Pope intended his abuse to reach its mark. Sappho was an obvious name for the most famous of poetic ladies. Pope himself, in one of his last letters to her, says that fragments of her writing would please him like fragments of Sappho's; and their mediator, Peterborough, writes of her under the same name in some complimentary and once well-known verses to Mrs. Howard. Pope had himself alluded to her as Sappho in some verses addressed (about 1722) to another lady, Judith Cowper, afterwards Mrs. Madan, who was for a time the object of some of his artificial gallantry. The only thing that can be

said is that his abuse was a sheer piece of Billingsgate, too devoid of plausibility to be more than an expression of virulent hatred. He was like a dirty boy who throws mud from an ambush, and declares that he did not see the victim bespattered.*

A bitter and humiliating quarrel followed. Lord Hervey, who had been described as "Lord Fanny," in the same satire, joined with his friend, Lady Mary, in writing lampoons upon Pope. The best known was a copy of verses, chiefly, if not exclusively by Lady Mary, in which Pope is brutally taunted with the personal deformities of his "wretched little carcass," which, it seems, are the only cause of his being "unwhipt, unblanketed, unkicked." One verse seems to have stung him more deeply, which says that his "crabbed numbers" are

Hard as his heart and as his birth obscure.

To this and other assaults Pope replied by a long letter, suppressed, however, for the time, which, as Johnson says, exhibits to later readers "nothing but tedious malignity," and is, in fact, a careful raking together of everything likely to give pain to his victim. It was not published till 1751, when both Pope and Hervey were dead. In

* An other couplet in the second book of the *Dunciad* about "hapless Monsieur" and "Lady Maries," was also applied at the time to Lady M. W. Montagu and Pope in a later note affects to deny, thus really pointing the *reversum*. But the obvious meaning of the whole passage is that "dutchesses and Lady Maries" might be persecuted by abandoned women, which would certainly be unpleasant for them, but does not imply any imputation upon their character. If Lady Mary was really the author of a "Pop upon Pope"—a story of Pope's supposed wapping in the vein of his own attack upon Dennis, she already considered him as the author of some scandal. The line in the *Dunciad* was taken to allude to a story about a M. Remond which has been fully cleared up.

his later writings he made references to Sappho, which fixed the name upon her, and amongst other pleasant insinuations, speaks of a weakness which she shared with Dr. Johnson,—an inadequate appreciation of clean linen. More malignant accusations are implied both in his acknowledged and anonymous writings. The most ferocious of all his assaults, however, is the character of Sporus, that is Lord Hervey, in the epistle to Arbuthnot, where he seems to be actually screaming with malignant fury. He returns the taunts as to effeminacy, and calls his adversary a “mere white curd of asses’ milk,”—an innocent drink, which he was himself in the habit of consuming.

We turn gladly from these miserable hostilities, disgraceful to all concerned. Were any excuse available for Pope, it would be in the brutality of taunts, coming not only from rough dwellers in Grub Street, but from the most polished representatives of the highest classes, upon personal defects, which the most ungenerous assailant might surely have spared. But it must also be granted that Pope was neither the last to give provocation, nor at all inclined to refrain from the use of poisoned weapons.

The other connexion of which I have spoken has also its mystery,—like everything else in Pope’s career. Pope had been early acquainted with Teresa and Martha Blount. Teresa was born in the same year as Pope, and Martha two years later.⁶ They were daughters of Lister Blount, of Mapledurham, and after his death, in 1710, and the marriage of their only brother, in 1711, they lived with their

⁶ The statements as to the date of the acquaintance are contradictory. Martha told Spence that she first knew Pope as a “very little girl,” but added that it was after the publication of the *Essay on Criticism*, when she was twenty-one; and at another time, that it was after he had begun the *Iliad*, which was later than part of the published correspondence.

mother in London, and passed much of the summer near Twickenham. They seem to have been lively young women, who had been educated at Paris. Teresa was the most religious, and the greatest lover of London society. I have already quoted a passage or two from the early letters addressed to the two sisters. It has also to be said that he was guilty of writing to them stuff which it is inconceivable that any decent man should have communicated to a modest woman. They do not seem to have taken offence. He professes himself the slave of both alternately or together. "Even from my infancy," he says (in 1714) "I have been in love with one or other of you week by week, and my journey to Bath fell out in the 376th week of the reign of my sovereign lady Sylvia. At the present writing hereof, it is the 389th week of the reign of your most serene majesty, in whose service I was listed some weeks before I beheld your sister." He had suggested to Lady Mary that the concluding lines of *Eloisa* contained a delicate compliment to her; and he characteristically made a similar insinuation to Martha Blount about the same passage. Pope was decidedly an economist even of his compliments. Some later letters are in less artificial language, and there is a really touching and natural letter to Teresa in regard to an illness of her sister's. After a time, we find that some difficulty has arisen. He feels that his presence gives pain; when he comes he either makes her (apparently Teresa) uneasy, or he sees her unkind. Teresa, it would seem, is jealous and disapproves of his attentions to Martha. In the midst of this we find that in 1717 Pope settled an annuity upon Teresa of 40*l.* a year for six years, on condition of her not being married during that time. The fact has suggested various speculations, but was, perhaps, only a part of some family ar-

rangement, made convenient by the diminished fortunes of the ladies. Whatever the history, Pope gradually became attached to Martha, and simultaneously came to regard Teresa with antipathy. Martha, in fact, became by degrees almost a member of his household. His correspondents take for granted that she is his regular companion. He writes of her to Gay, in 1730, as "a friend—a woman friend, God help me!—with whom I have spent three or four hours a day these fifteen years." In his last years, when he was most dependent upon kindness, he seems to have expected that she should be invited to any house which he was himself to visit. Such a close connexion naturally caused some scandal. In 1725, he defends himself against "villanous lying tales" of this kind to his old friend Caryll, with whom the Blounts were connected. At the same time he is making bitter complaints of Teresa. He accused her afterwards (1729) of having an intrigue with a married man, of "striking, pinching, and abusing her mother to the utmost shamefulness." The mother, he thinks, is too meek to resent this tyranny, and Martha, as it appears, refuses to believe the reports against her sister. Pope audaciously suggests that it would be a good thing if the mother could be induced to retire to a convent, and is anxious to persuade Martha to leave so painful a home. The same complaints reappear in many letters, but the position remained unaltered. It is impossible to say with any certainty what may have been the real facts. Pope's mania for suspicion deprives his suggestions of the slightest value. The only inference to be drawn is, that he drew closer to Martha Blount as years went by; and was anxious that she should become independent of her family. This naturally led to mutual dislike and suspicion, but nobody can now say whether Teresa pinched

her mother, nor what would have been her account of Martha's relations to Pope.

Johnson repeats a story that Martha neglected Pope "with shameful unkindness," in his later years. It is clearly exaggerated or quite unfounded. At any rate, the poor sickly man, in his premature and childless old age, looked up to her with fond affection, and left to her nearly the whole of his fortune. His biographers have indulged in discussions—surely superfluous—as to the morality of the connexion. There is no question of seduction, or of tampering with the affections of an innocent woman. Pope was but too clearly disqualified from acting the part of Lothario. There was not in his case any Vanessa to give a tragic turn to the connexion, which, otherwise, resembled Swift's connexion with Stella. Miss Blount, from all that appears, was quite capable of taking care of herself, and had she wished for marriage, need only have intimated her commands to her lover. It is probable enough that the relations between them led to very unpleasant scenes in her family ; but she did not suffer otherwise in accepting Pope's attentions. The probability seems to be that the friendship had become imperceptibly closer, and that what began as an idle affectation of gallantry was slowly changed into a devoted attachment, but not until Pope's health was so broken that marriage would then, if not always, have appeared to be a mockery.

Poets have a bad reputation as husbands. Strong passions and keen sensibilities may easily disqualify a man for domestic tranquillity, and prompt a revolt against rules essential to social welfare. Pope, like other poets from Shakspere to Shelley, was unfortunate in his love affairs ; but his ill-fortune took a characteristic shape. He was not carried away, like Byron and Burns, by overpowering

passions. Rather the emotional power which lay in his nature was prevented from displaying itself by his physical infirmities, and his strange trickiness and morbid irritability. A man who could not make tea without a stratagem, could hardly be a downright lover. We may imagine that he would at once make advances and retract them ; that he would be intolerably touchy and suspicious ; that every coolness would be interpreted as a deliberate insult, and that the slightest hint would be enough to set his jealousy in a flame. A woman would feel that, whatever his genius and his genuine kindness, one thing was impossible with him—that is, a real confidence in his sincerity ; and, therefore, on the whole, it may, perhaps, be reckoned as a piece of good fortune for the most wayward and excitable of sane mankind, that if he never fully gained the most essential condition of all human happiness, he yet formed a deep and lasting attachment to a woman who, more or less, returned his feeling. In a life so full of bitterness, so harassed by physical pain, one is glad to think, even whilst admitting that the suffering was in great part foolish self-torture, and in part inflicted as a retribution for injuries to others, that some glow of feminine kindness might enlighten the dreary stages of his progress through life. The years left to him after the death of his mother were few and evil, and it would be hard to grudge him such consolation as he could receive from the glances of Patty Blount's blue eyes—the eyes which, on Walpole's testimony, were the last remains of her beauty.

CHAPTER V.

THE WAR WITH THE DUNCES.

IN the *Dunciad*, published soon after the *Odyssey*, Pope laments ten years spent as a commentator and translator. He was not without compensation. The drudgery—for the latter part of his task must have been felt as drudgery—once over, he found himself in a thoroughly independent position, still on the right side of forty, and able to devote his talents to any task which might please him. The task which he actually chose was not calculated to promote his happiness. We must look back to an earlier period to explain its history. During the last years of Queen Anne, Pope had belonged to a “little senate” in which Swift was the chief figure. Though Swift did not exercise either so gentle or so imperial a sway as Addison, the cohesion between the more independent members of this rival clique was strong and lasting. They amused themselves by projecting the *Scriblerus Club*, a body which never had, it would seem, any definite organization, but was held to exist for the prosecution of a design never fully executed. *Martinus Scriblerus* was the name of an imaginary pedant—a precursor and relative of Dr. *Dryasdust*—whose memoirs and works were to form a satire upon stupidity in the guise of learning. The various members of the club were to share in the compila-

tion ; and if such joint-stock undertakings were practicable in literature, it would be difficult to collect a more brilliant set of contributors. After Swift—the terrible humourist of whom we can hardly think without a mixture of horror and compassion—the chief members were Atterbury, Arbuthnot, Gay, Parnell, and Pope himself. Parnell, an amiable man, died in 1717, leaving works which were edited by Pope in 1722. Atterbury, a potential Wolsey or Laud born in an uncongenial period, was a man of fine literary taste—a warm admirer of Milton (though he did exhort Pope to put *Samson Agonistes* into civilised costume—one of the most unlucky suggestions ever made by mortal man), a judicious critic of Pope himself, and one who had already given proofs of his capacity in literary warfare by his share in the famous controversy with Bentley. Though no one now doubts the measureless superiority of Bentley, the clique of Swift and Pope still cherished the belief that the wit of Atterbury and his allies had triumphed over the ponderous learning of the pedant. Arbuthnot, whom Swift had introduced to Pope as a man who could do everything but walk, was an amiable and accomplished physician. He was a strong Tory and high churchman, and retired for a time to France upon the death of Anne and the overthrow of his party. He returned, however, to England, resumed his practice, and won Pope's warmest gratitude by his skill and care. He was a man of learning, and had employed it in an attack upon Woodward's geological speculations, as already savouring of heterodoxy. He possessed also a vein of genuine humour, resembling that of Swift, though it has rather lost its savour, perhaps, because it was not salted by the Dean's misanthropic bitterness. If his good humour

weakened his wit, it gained him the affections of his friends, and was never soured by the sufferings of his later years. Finally, John Gay, though fat, lazy, and wanting in manliness of spirit, had an illimitable flow of good-tempered banter, and if he could not supply the learning of Arbuthnot, he could give what was more valuable, touches of fresh natural simplicity, which still explain the liking of his friends. Gay, as Johnson says, was the general favourite of the wits, though a playfellow rather than a partner, and treated with more fondness than respect. Pope seems to have loved him better than any one, and was probably soothed by his easy-going, unsuspecting temper. They were of the same age, and Gay, who had been apprenticed to a linen-draper, managed to gain notice by his poetical talents, and was taken up by various great people. Pope said of him that he wanted independence of spirit, which is indeed obvious enough. He would have been a fitting inmate of Thomson's Castle of Indolence. He was one of those people who consider that Providence is bound to put food into their mouths without giving them any trouble; and, as sometimes happens, his draft upon the general system of things was honoured. He was made comfortable by various patrons; the Duchess of Queensberry patted him in his later years, and the duke kept his money for him. His friends chose to make a grievance of the neglect of Government to add to his comfort by a good place; they encouraged him to refuse the only place offered as not sufficiently dignified; and he even became something of a martyr when his *Polly*, a sequel to the *Beggars' Opera*, was prohibited by the Lord Chamberlain, and a good subscription made him ample amends. Pope has immortalized the complaint by lamenting the fate of "neglected

genius" in the Epistle to Arbuthnot, and declaring that the "sole return" of all Gay's "blameless life" was

My verse and Queensberry weeping o'er thy urn.

Pope's alliance with Gay had various results. Gay continued the war with Ambrose Philips by writing burlesque pastorals, of which Johnson truly says that they show "the effect of reality and truth, even when the intention was to show them grovelling and degraded." They may still be glanced at with pleasure. Soon after the publication of the mock pastorals, the two friends, in company with Arbuthnot, had made an adventure more in the spirit of the Scriblerus Club. A farce called *Three Hours after Marriage* was produced and damned in 1717. It was intended (amongst other things) to satirize Pope's old enemy Dennis, called "Sir Tremendous," as an embodiment of pedantic criticism, and Arbuthnot's old antagonist Woodward. A taste for fossils, mummies, or antiquities, was at that time regarded as a fair butt for unsparing ridicule; but the three great wits managed their assault so clumsily as to become ridiculous themselves; and Pope, as we shall presently see, smarted as usual under failure.

After Swift's retirement to Ireland, and during Pope's absorption in Homer, the Scriblerus Club languished. Some fragments, however, of the great design were executed by the four chief members, and the dormant project was revived, after Pope had finished his Homer, on occasion of the last two visits of Swift to England. He passed six months in England from March to August, 1726, and had brought with him the MS. of *Gulliver's Travels*, the greatest satire produced by the Scriblerians. He passed a great part of his time at Twickenham, and in

rambling with Pope or Gay about the country. Those who do not know how often the encounter of brilliant wits tends to neutralize rather than stimulate their activity, may wish to have been present at a dinner which took place at Twickenham on July 6th, 1726, when the party was made up of Pope, the most finished poet of the day; Swift, the deepest humourist; Bolingbroke, the most brilliant politician; Congreve, the wittiest writer of comedy; and Gay, the author of the most successful burlesque. The envious may console themselves by thinking that Pope very likely went to sleep, that Swift was deaf and overbearing, that Congreve and Bolingbroke were painfully witty, and Gay frightened into silence. When in 1727 Swift again visited England, and stayed at Twickenham, the clouds were gathering. The scene is set before us in some of Swift's verses :—

Pope has the talent well to speak,
But not to reach the ear;
His loudest voice is low and weak,
The dean too deaf to hear.

Awhile they on each other look,
Then different studies choose;
The dean sits plodding o'er a book,
Pope walks and courts the muse.

“Two sick friends,” says Swift in a letter written after his return to Ireland, “never did well together.” It is plain that their infirmities had been mutually trying, and on the last day of August Swift suddenly withdrew from Twickenham, in spite of Pope's entreaties. He had heard of the last illness of Stella, which was finally to crush his happiness. Unable to endure the company of friends, he went to London in very bad health, and thence, after a short stay, to Ireland, leaving behind him

a letter which, says Pope, "affected me so much that it made me like a girl." It was a gloomy parting, and the last. The stern Dean retired to die "like a poisoned rat in a hole," after long years of bitterness, and finally of slow intellectual decay. He always retained perfect confidence in his friend's affection. Poor Pope, as he says in the verses on his own death,—

will grieve a month, and Gay
A week, and Arbuthnot a day ;

and they were the only friends to whom he attributes sincere sorrow.

Meanwhile two volumes of *Miscellanies*, the joint work of the four wits, appeared in June, 1727, and a third in March, 1728. A fourth, hastily got up, was published in 1732. They do not appear to have been successful. The copyright of the three volumes was sold for 225*l.*, of which Arbuthnot and Gay received each 50*l.*, whilst the remainder was shared between Pope and Swift ; and Swift seems to have given his part, according to his custom, to the widow of a respectable Dublin bookseller. Pope's correspondence with the publisher shows that he was entrusted with the financial details, and arranged them with the sharpness of a practised man of business. The whole collection was made up in great part of old scraps, and savoured of bookmaking, though Pope speaks complacently of the joint volumes, in which he says to Swift, "We look like friends, side by side, serious and merry by turns, conversing interchangeably, and walking down, hand in hand, to posterity." Of the various fragments contributed by Pope, there is only one which need be mentioned here—the treatise on *Bathos* in the third volume, in which he was helped by Arbuthnot. He told

Swift privately that he had "entirely methodized and in a manner written it all," though he afterwards chose to denounce the very same statement as a lie when the treatise brought him into trouble. It is the most amusing of his prose writings, consisting essentially of a collection of absurdities from various authors, with some apparently invented for the occasion, such as the familiar

Ye gods, annihilate but space and time,
And make two lovers happy !

and ending with the ingenious receipt to make an epic poem. Most of the passages ridiculed—and, it must be said, very deservedly—were selected from some of the various writers to whom, for one reason or another, he owed a grudge. Ambrose Philips and Dennis, his old enemies, and Theobald, who had criticised his edition of Shakespeare, supply several illustrations. Blackmore had spoken very strongly of the immorality of the wits in some prose essays ; Swift's Tale of a Tub, and a parody of the first psalm, anonymously circulated, but known to be Pope's, had been severely condemned ; and Pope took a cutting revenge by plentiful citations from Blackmore's most ludicrous bombast ; and even Broome, his colleague in Homer, came in for a passing stroke, for Broome and Pope were now at enmity. Finally, Pope fired a general volley into the whole crowd of bad authors by grouping them under the head of various animals—tortoises, parrots, frogs, and so forth—and adding under each head the initials of the persons described. He had the audacity to declare that the initials were selected at random. If so, a marvellous coincidence made nearly every pair of letters correspond to the name and surname of some contem-

porary poetaster. The classification was rather vague, but seems to have given special offence.

Meanwhile Pope was planning a more elaborate campaign against his adversaries. He now appeared for the first time as a formal satirist, and the *Dunciad*, in which he came forward as the champion of Wit, taken in its broad sense, against its natural antithesis, Dulness, is in some respect his masterpiece. It is addressed to Swift, who probably assisted at some of its early stages. O thou, exclaims the poet,—

O thou, whatever title please thine ear,
Dean, Drapier, Bickerstaff, or Gulliver !
Whether thou choose Cervantes' serious air,
Or laugh and shake in Rabelais's easy chair,—

And we feel that Swift is present in spirit throughout the composition. "The great fault of the *Dunciad*," says Warton, an intelligent and certainly not an over-severe critic, "is the excessive vehemence of the satire. It has been compared," he adds, "to the geysers propelling a vast column of boiling water by the force of subterranean fire ;" and he speaks of some one who after reading a book of the *Dunciad*, always soothes himself by a canto of the *Faery Queen*. Certainly a greater contrast could not easily be suggested ; and yet, I think, that the remark requires at least modification. The *Dunciad*, indeed, is beyond all question full of coarse abuse. The second book, in particular, illustrates that strange delight in the physically disgusting which Johnson notices as characteristic of Pope and his master, Swift. In the letter prefixed to the *Dunciad*, Pope tries to justify his abuse of his enemies by the example of Boileau, whom he appears to have considered as his great prototype. But Boileau

would have been revolted by the brutal images which Pope does not hesitate to introduce ; and it is a curious phenomenon that the poet who is pre-eminently the representative of polished society should openly take such pleasure in unmixed filth. Polish is sometimes very thin. It has been suggested that Swift, who was with Pope during the composition, may have been directly responsible for some of these brutalities. At any rate, as I have said, Pope has here been working in the Swift spirit, and this gives, I think, the keynote of his *Dunciad*.

The geyser comparison is so far misleading that Pope is not in his most spiteful mood. There is not that infusion of personal venom which appears so strongly in the character of *Spirus* and similar passages. In reading them we feel that the poet is writhing under some little mortification, and trying with concentrated malice to sting his adversary in the tenderest places. We hear a tortured victim screaming out the shrillest taunts at his tormentor. The abuse in the *Dunciad* is by comparison broad and even jovial. The tone at which Pope is aiming is that suggested by the "laughing and shaking in Rabelais' easy chair." It is meant to be a boisterous guffaw from capacious lungs, an enormous explosion of superlative contempt for the mob of stupid thickskinned scribblers. They are to be overwhelmed with gigantic cachinnations, ducked in the dirtiest of drams, rolled over and over with rough horseplay, pelted with the least savoury of rotten eggs, not skilfully anatomized or pierced with dexterously directed needles. Pope has really stood by too long, watching their tiresome antics and receiving their taunts, and he must once for all speak out and give them a lesson.

Out with it Dunciad ! let the secret pass,
That secret to each fool—that he's an ass !

That is his account of his feelings in the Prologue to the Satires, and he answers the probable remonstrance.

You think this cruel ? Take it for a rule,
No creature smarts so little as a fool.

To reconcile us to such laughter, it should have a more genial tone than Pope could find in his nature. We ought to feel, and we certainly do not feel, that after the joke has been fired off there should be some possibility of reconciliation, or, at least, we should find some recognition of the fact that the victims are not to be hated simply because they were not such clever fellows as Pope. There is something cruel in Pope's laughter, as in Swift's. The missiles are not mere filth, but are weighted with hard materials that bruise and mangle. He professes that his enemies were the first aggressors, a plea which can be only true in part ; and he defends himself, feebly enough, against the obvious charge that he has ridiculed men for being obscure, poor, and stupid—faults not to be amended by satire, nor rightfully provocative of enmity. In fact, Pope knows in his better moments that a man is not necessarily wicked because he sleeps on a bulk, or writes verses in a garret ; but he also knows that to mention those facts will give his enemies pain, and he cannot refrain from the use of so handy a weapon.

Such faults make one half ashamed of confessing to reading the Dunciad with pleasure ; and yet it is frequently written with such force and freedom that we half pardon the cruel little persecutor, and admire the vigour with which he throws down the gauntlet to the natural

enemies of genius. The *Dunciad* is modelled upon the *Mac Flecknoe*, in which Dryden celebrates the appointment of Elkanah Shadwell to succeed Flecknoe as monarch of the realms of Dulness, and describes the coronation ceremonies. Pope imitates many passages, and adopts the general design. Though he does not equal the vigour of some of Dryden's lines, and wages war in a more ungenerous spirit, the *Dunciad* has a wider scope than its original, and shows Pope's command of his weapons in occasional felicitous phrases, in the vigour of the versification, and in the general sense of form and clear presentation of the scene imagined. For a successor to the great empire of dulness he chose (in the original form of the poem) the unlucky Theobald, a writer to whom the merit is attributed of having first illustrated Shakspeare by a study of the contemporary literature. In doing this he had fallen foul of Pope, who could claim no such merit for his own editorial work, and Pope therefore regarded him as a grovelling antiquarian. As such, he was a fit pretender enough to the throne once occupied by Settle. The *Dunciad* begins by a spirited description of the goddess brooding in her cell upon the eve of a Lord Mayor's day, when the proud scene was o'er,

But lived in Settle's numbers one day more

The predestined hero is meanwhile musing in his Gothic library, and addresses a solemn invocation to Dulness, who accepts his sacrifice—a pile of his own works—transports him to her temple, and declares him to be the legitimate successor to the former rulers of her kingdom. The second book describes the games held in honour of the new ruler. Some of them are, as a frank critic observes, “beastly;” but a brief report of the least objec-

tionable may serve as a specimen of the whole performance. Dulness, with her court descends

To where Fleet Ditch with disemboguing streams
Rolls the large tribute of dead dogs to Thames,
The king of dykes than whom no sluice of mud
With deeper sable blots the silver flood.—
Here strip, my children, here at once leap in ;
Here prove who best can dash through thick and thin,
And who the most in love of dirt excel.

And, certainly by the poet's account, they all love it as well as their betters. The competitors in this contest are drawn from the unfortunates immersed in what Warburton calls "the common sink of all such writers (as Ralph)—a political newspaper." They were all hateful, partly because they were on the side of Walpole, and therefore, by Pope's logic, unprincipled hirelings, and more, because in that cause, as others, they had assaulted Pope and his friend. There is Oldmixon, a hack writer employed in compilations, who accused Atterbury of falsifying Clarendon, and was accused of himself falsifying historical documents in the interests of Whiggism ; and Smedley, an Irish clergyman, a special enemy of Swift's, who had just printed a collection of assaults upon the miscellanies called *Gulliveriana* ; and Concanen, another Irishman, an ally of Theobald's, and (it may be noted) of Warburton's, who attacked the *Bathos*, and received — of course, for the worst services—an appointment in Jamaica ; and Arnall, one of Walpole's most favoured journalists, who was said to have received for himself or others near 11,000*l.* in four years. Each dives in a way supposed to be characteristic, Oldmixon with the pathetic exclamation,

And am I now threescore ?
Ah, why, ye gods, should two and two make four ?

Concanen, "a cold, long-winded native of the deep," dives perseveringly, but without causing a ripple in the stream :

Not so bold Arnall—with a weight of skull
Furious he dives, precipitately dull,

and ultimately emerges to claim the prize, "with half the bottom on his head." But Smedley, who has been given up for lost, comes up,

Shaking the horrors of his sable brows,

and relates how he has been sucked in by the mud-nymphs, and how they have shown him a branch of Styx which here pours into the Thames, and diffuses its soporific vapours over the Temple and its purlieus. He is solemnly welcomed by Milbourn (a reverend antagonist of Dryden), who tells him to "receive these robes which once were mine,"

Dulness is sacred in a sound divine.

The games are concluded in the second book ; and in the third the hero, sleeping in the Temple of Dulness, meets in a vision the ghost of Settle, who reveals to him the future of his empire ; tells how dulness is to overspread the world, and revive the triumphs of Goths and monks ; how the hated Dennis, and Gildon, and others, are to overwhelm scorers, and set up at court, and preside over arts and sciences, though a fit of temporary sanity causes him to give a warning to the deists—

But learn ye dunces ! not to scorn your God —

and how posterity is to witness the decay of the stage, under a deluge of silly farce, opera, and sensation dramas ; how bad architects are to deface the works of Wren and

Inigo Jones ; whilst the universities and public schools are to be given up to games and idleness, and the birch is to be abolished.

Fragments of the prediction have not been entirely falsified, though the last couplet intimates a hope.

Enough ! enough ! the raptured monarch cries,
And through the ivory gate the vision flies.

The Dunciad was thus a declaration of war against the whole tribe of scribblers ; and, like other such declarations, it brought more consequences than Pope foresaw. It introduced Pope to a very dangerous line of conduct. Swift had written to Pope in 1725 : “ Take care that the bad poets do not outwit you, as they have served the good ones in every age, whom they have provoked to transmit their names to posterity ; ” and the Dunciad has been generally censured from Swift’s point of view. Satire, it is said, is wasted upon such insignificant persons. To this Pope might have replied, with some plausibility, that the interest of satire must always depend upon its internal qualities, not upon our independent knowledge of its object. Though Gildon and Arnall are forgotten, the type “ dunce ” is eternal. The warfare, however, was demoralizing in another sense. Whatever may have been the injustice of Pope’s attacks upon individuals, the moral standard of the Grub Street population was far from exalted. The poor scribbler had too many temptations to sell himself, and to evade the occasional severity of the laws of libel by humiliating contrivances. Moreover, the uncertainty of the law of copyright encouraged the lower class of booksellers to undertake all kinds of piratical enterprises, and to trade in various ways upon the fame of well-known authors, by attributing trash to them, or purloining and

publishing what the authors would have suppressed. Dublin was to London what New York is now, and successful books were at once reproduced in Ireland. Thus the lower strata of the literary class frequently practised with impunity all manner of more or less discreditable trickery, and Pope, with his morbid propensity for mystification, was only too apt a pupil in such arts. Though the tone of his public utterances was always of the loftiest, he was like a civilized commander who, in carrying on a war with savages, finds it convenient to adopt the practices which he professes to disapprove.

The whole publication of the *Dunciad* was surrounded with tricks, intended partly to evade possible consequences, and partly to excite public interest or to cause amusement at the expense of the bewildered victims. Part of the plot was concerted with Swift, who, however, does not appear to have been quite in the secret. The complete poem was intended to appear with an elaborate mock commentary by Scriblerus, explaining some of the allusions, and with "proeme, prolegomena, testimonia scriptorum, index auctorum, and note variorum." In the first instance, however, it appeared in a mangled form without this burlesque apparatus or the lines to Swift. Four editions were issued in this form in 1728, and with a mock notice from the publisher, expressing a hope that the author would be provoked to give a more perfect edition. This, accordingly, appeared in 1729. Pope seems to have been partly led to this device by a principle which he avowed to Warburton. When he had anything specially sharp to say he kept it for a second edition, where it would, he thought, pass with less offence. But he may also have been under the impression that all the mystery of apparently spurious editions would excite public curi-

osity. He adopted other devices for avoiding unpleasant consequences. It was possible that his victims might appeal to the law. In order to throw dust in their eyes, two editions appeared in Dublin and London, the Dublin edition professing to be a reprint from a London edition, whilst the London edition professed in the same way to be the reprint of a Dublin edition. To oppose another obstacle to prosecutors, he assigned the *Dunciad* to three noblemen—Lords Bathurst, Burlington, and Oxford—who transferred their right to Pope's publisher. Pope would be sheltered behind these responsible persons, and an aggrieved person might be slower to attack persons of high position and property. By yet another device Pope applied for an injunction in Chancery to suppress a piratical London edition; but ensured the failure of his application by not supplying the necessary proofs of property. This trick, repeated, as we shall see, on another occasion, was intended either to shirk responsibility or to increase the notoriety of the book. A further mystification was equally characteristic. To the *Dunciad* in its enlarged form is prefixed a letter, really written by Pope himself, but praising his morality and genius, and justifying his satire in terms which would have been absurd in Pope's own mouth. He therefore induced a Major Cleland, a retired officer of some position, to put his name to the letter, which it is possible that he may have partly written. The device was transparent, and only brought ridicule upon its author. Finally, Pope published an account of the publication in the name of Savage, known by Johnson's biography, who seems to have been a humble ally of the great man—at once a convenient source of information and a tool for carrying on this underground warfare. Pope afterwards incorporated this statement—which was meant to prove, by some palpable

falsehoods, that the dunces had not been the aggressors—in his own notes, without Savage's name. This labyrinth of unworthy devices was more or less visible to Pope's antagonists. It might in some degree be excusable as a huge practical joke, absurdly elaborate for the purpose, but it led Pope into some slippery ways, where no such excuse is available.

Pope, says Johnson, contemplated his victory over the dunces with great exultation. Through his mouthpiece, Savage, he described the scene on the day of publication; how a crowd of authors besieged the shop and threatened him with violence; how the booksellers and hawkers struggled with small success for copies; how the dunces formed clubs to devise measures of retaliation; how one wrote to ministers to denounce Pope as a traitor, and another brought an image in clay to execute him in effigy; and how successive editions, genuine and spurious, followed each other, distinguished by an owl or an ass on the frontispiece, and provoking infinite controversy amongst rival vendors. It is unpleasant to have ugly names hurled at one by the first writer of the day; but the abuse was for the most part too general to be libellous. Nor would there be any great interest now in exactly distributing the blame between Pope and his enemies. A word or two may be said of one of the most conspicuous quarrels.

Aaron Hill was a fussy and ambitious person, full of literary and other schemes; devising a plan for extracting oil from beech-nuts, and writing a Pindaric ode on the occasion; felling forests in the Highlands to provide timber for the navy; and, as might be inferred, spending instead of making a fortune. He was a stage-manager, translated Voltaire's *Merope*, wrote words for Handel's first composition in England, wrote unsuccessful plays, a quantity of

unreadable poetry, and corresponded with most of the literary celebrities. Pope put his initials, A. H., under the head of "Flying Fishes," in the Bathos, as authors who now and then rise upon their fins and fly, but soon drop again to the profound. In the Dunciad, he reappeared amongst the divers.

Then * * tried, but hardly snatch'd from sight
Instant buoys up and rises into light :
He bears no token of the sable streams,
And mounts far off amongst the swans of Thames.

A note applied the lines to Hill, with whom he had had a former misunderstanding. Hill replied to these assaults by a ponderous satire in verse upon "tuneful Alexis;" it had, however, some tolerable lines at the opening, imitated from Pope's own verses upon Addison, and attributing to him the same jealousy of merit in others. Hill soon afterwards wrote a civil note to Pope, complaining of the passage in the Dunciad. Pope might have relied upon the really satisfactory answer that the lines were, on the whole, complimentary; indeed, more complimentary than true. But with his natural propensity for lying, he resorted to his old devices. In answer to this and a subsequent letter, in which Hill retorted with unanswerable force, Pope went on to declare that he was not the author of the notes, that the extracts had been chosen at random, that he would "use his influence with the editors of the Dunciad to get the note altered"; and, finally, by an ingenious evasion, pointed out that the blank in the Dunciad required to be filled up by a dissyllable. This, in the form of the lines as quoted above, is quite true, but in the first edition of the Dunciad the first verse had been

H— tried the next, but hardly snatch'd from sight.

Hill did not detect this specimen of what Pope somewhere calls "pretty genteel equivocation." He was reconciled to Pope, and taught the poor poet by experience that his friendship was worse than his enmity. He wrote him letters of criticism; he forced poor Pope to negotiate for him with managers and to bring distinguished friends to the performances of his dreary plays; nay, to read through, or to say that he had read through, one of them in manuscript four times, and make corrections mixed with elaborate eulogy. No doubt Pope came to regard a letter from Hill with terror, though Hill compared him to Horace and Juvenal, and hoped that he would live till the virtues which his spirit would propagate became as general as the esteem of his genius. In short, Hill, who was a florid flatterer, is so complimentary that we are not surprised to find him telling Richardson, after Pope's death, that the poet's popularity was due to a certain "bladdery swell of management." "But," he concludes, "rest his memory in in peace." It will very rarely be disturbed by that time he himself is ashes.'

The war raged for some time. Dennis, Smedley, Moore-Smythe, Welsted, and others, retorted by various pamphlets, the names of which were published by Pope in an appendix to future editions of the "Dunciad," by way of proving that his own blows had told. Lady Mary was credited, perhaps unjustly, with an abusive performance called a "Pop upon Pope," relating how Pope had been soundly whipped by a couple of his victims—of course a pure fiction. Some such vengeance, however, was seriously threatened. As Pope was dining one day at Lord Bathurst's, the servant brought in the agreeable message that a young man was waiting for Mr. Pope in the lane outside, and that the young man's

name was Dennis. He was the son of the critic, and prepared to avenge his father's wrongs ; but Bathurst persuaded him to retire, without the glory of thrashing a cripple. Reports of such possibilities were circulated, and Pope thought it prudent to walk out with his big Danish dog Bounce, and a pair of pistols. Spence tried to persuade the little man not to go out alone, but Pope declared that he would not go a step out of his way for such villains, and that it was better to die than to live in fear of them. He continued, indeed, to give fresh provocation. A weekly paper, called the *Grub-street Journal*, was started in January, 1730, and continued to appear till the end of 1737. It included a continuous series of epigrams and abuse, in the Scriblerian vein, and aimed against the heroes of the *Dunciad*, amongst whom poor James Moore-Smythe seems to have had the largest share of abuse. It was impossible, however, for Pope, busied as he was in literature and society, and constantly out of health, to be the efficient editor of such a performance ; but though he denied having any concern in it, it is equally out of the question that any one really unconnected with Pope should have taken up the huge burden of his quarrels in this fashion. Though he concealed, and on occasions denied his connexion, he no doubt inspired the editors and contributed articles to its pages, especially during its early years. It is a singular fact—or rather, it would have been singular, had Pope been a man of less abnormal character—that he should have devoted so much energy to this paltry subterranean warfare against the objects of his complex antipathies. Pope was so anxious for concealment, that he kept his secret even from his friendly legal adviser Fortescue ; and Fortescue innocently requested Pope to get up evidence

to support a charge of libel against his own organ. The evidence which Pope collected—in defence of a quack-doctor, Ward—was not, as we may suppose, very valuable. Two volumes of the Grub-street Journal were printed in 1737, and a fragment or two was admitted by Pope into his works. It is said, in the preface to the collected pieces, that the journal was killed by the growing popularity of the Gentleman's Magazine, which is accused of living by plunder. But in truth the reader will infer that, if the selection includes the best pieces, the journal may well have died from congenital weakness.

The Dunciad was yet to go through a transformation, and to lead to a new quarrel; and though this happened at a much later period, it will be most convenient to complete the story here. Pope had formed an alliance with Warburton, of which I shall presently have to speak; and it was under Warburton's influence that he resolved to add a fourth book to the Dunciad. This supplement seems to have been really made up of fragments provided for another scheme. The Essay on Man—to be presently mentioned—was to be followed by a kind of poetical essay upon the nature and limits of the human understanding, and a satire upon the misapplication of the serious faculties.¹ It was a design manifestly beyond the author's powers; and even the fragment which is turned into the fourth book of the Dunciad takes him plainly out of his depth. He was no philosopher, and therefore an incompetent assailant of the abuses of philosophy. The fourth book consists chiefly of ridicule upon pedagogues who teach words instead of things; upon the unlucky "virtuosos" who care for old medals, plants, and butterflies—pursuits which afforded

¹ See Pope to Swift, March 25, 1736.

an unceasing supply of ridicule to the essayists of the time ; a denunciation of the corruption of modern youth, who learn nothing but new forms of vice in the grand tour ; and a fresh assault upon Toland, Tindal, and other freethinkers of the day.. There were some passages marked by Pope's usual dexterity, but the whole is awkwardly constructed, and has no very intelligible connexion with the first part. It was highly admired at the time, and, amongst others, by Gray. He specially praises a passage which has often been quoted as representing Pope's highest achievement in his art. At the conclusion the goddess Dulness yawns, and a blight falls upon art, science, and philosophy. I quote the lines, which Pope himself could not repeat without emotion, and which have received the highest eulogies from Johnson and Thackeray.

In vain, in vain—the all-composing Hour
Resistless falls ; the Muse obeys the Power—
She comes ! she comes ! the sable throne behold
Of night primeval and of chaos old !
Before her Fancy's gilded clouds decay,
And all its varying rainbows die away.
Wit shoots in vain its momentary fires,
The meteor drops, and in a flash expires,
As one by one, at dread Medea's strain,
The sickening stars fade off the ethereal plain ;
As Argus' eyes by Hermes' wand oppress'd
Closed one by one to everlasting rest ;
Thus at her felt approach, and secret might,
Art after art goes out, and all is night.
See skulking Truth to her old cavern fled,
Mountains of casuistry heaped o'er her head !
Philosophy, that lean'd on heaven before,
Shrinks to her second cause, and is no more.
Physic of Metaphysic begs defence,
And Metaphysic calls for aid on Sense !

See Mystery to Mathematics fly !
In vain ! They gaze, turn giddy, rave and die.
Religion blushing veils her sacred fires
And unawares Morality expires.
Nor public flame, nor private, darses to shine ;
Nor human spark is left, nor glimpe divine !
Lo ! thy dread empire Chaos ! is restored ;
Light dies before thy uncreating word,
Thy hand, great Anarch, lets the curtain fall
And universal darkness buries all.

The most conspicuous figure in this new Dunciad (published March, 1742), is Bentley—taken as the representative of a pedant rampant. Bentley is, I think, the only man of real genius of whom Pope has spoken in terms implying gross misappreciation. With all his faults, Pope was a really fine judge of literature, and has made fewer blunders than such men as Addison, Gray, and Johnson, infinitely superior to him in generosity of feeling towards the living. He could even appreciate Bentley, and had written, in his copy of Bentley's Milton, "*Pulchre, bene, recte,*" against some of the happier emendations in the great critic's most unsuccessful performance. The assault in the Dunciad is not the less unsparing and ignorantly contemptuous of scholarship. The explanation is easy. Bentley, who had spoken contemptuously of Pope's Homer, said of Pope, "the portentous cub never forgives." But this was not all. Bentley had provoked enemies by his intense pugnacity almost as freely as Pope by his sneaking malice. Swift and Atterbury, objects of Pope's friendly admiration, had been his antagonists, and Pope would naturally accept their view of his merits. And, moreover, Pope's great ally of this period had a dislike of his own to Bentley. Bentley had said of Warburton that he was a

man of monstrous appetite and bad digestion. The remark hit Warburton's most obvious weakness. Warburton, with his imperfect scholarship, and vast masses of badly assimilated learning, was jealous of the reputation of the thoroughly trained and accurate critic. It was the dislike of a charlatan for the excellence which he endeavoured to simulate. Bolingbroke, it may be added, was equally contemptuous in his language about men of learning, and for much the same reason. He depreciated what he could not rival. Pope, always under the influence of some stronger companions, naturally adopted their shallow prejudices, and recklessly abused a writer who should have been recognized as amongst the most effective combatants against dulness.

Bentley died a few months after the publication of the *Dunciad*. But Pope found a living antagonist, who succeeded in giving him pain enough to gratify the vilified dunces. This was Colley Cibber—most lively and mercurial of actors—author of some successful plays, with too little stuff in them for permanence, and of an *Apology for his own Life*, which is still exceedingly amusing as well as useful for the history of the stage. He was now approaching seventy, though he was to survive Pope for thirteen years, and as good-tempered a specimen of the lively, if not too particular, old man of the world as could well have been found. Pope owed him a grudge. Cibber, in playing the *Rehearsal*, had introduced some ridicule of the unlucky *Three Hours after Marriage*. Pope, he says, came behind the scenes foaming and choking with fury, and forbidding Cibber ever to repeat the insult. Cibber laughed at him, said that he would repeat it as long as the *Rehearsal* was performed, and kept his word. Pope took his revenge

by many incidental hits at Cibber, and Cibber made a good-humoured reference to this abuse in the *Apology*. Hereupon Pope, in the new *Dunciad*, described him as reclining on the lap of the goddess, and added various personalities in the notes. Cibber straightway published a letter to Pope, the more cutting because still in perfect good-humour, and told the story about the original quarrel. He added an irritating anecdote in order to provoke the poet still further. It described Pope as introduced by Cibber and Lord Warwick to very bad company. The story was one which could only be told by a graceless old representative of the old school of comedy, but it hit its mark. The two Richardsons once found Pope reading one of Cibber's pamphlets. He said, "These things are my diversion," but they saw his features writhing with anguish, and young Richardson, as they went home, observed to his father that he hoped to be preserved from such diversions as Pope had enjoyed. The poet resolved to avenge himself, and he did it to the lasting injury of his poem. He dethroned Theobald, who, as a plodding antiquarian, was an excellent exponent of dulness, and installed Cibber in his place, who might be a representative of folly, but was as little of a dullard as Pope himself. The consequent alterations make the hero of the poem a thoroughly incongruous figure, and greatly injure the general design. The poem appeared in this form in 1743, with a ponderous prefatory discourse by Ricardus Aristarchus, contributed by the faithful Warburton, and illustrating his ponderous vein of elephantine pleasantry.

Pope was nearing the grave, and many of his victims had gone before him. It was a melancholy employment for an invalid, breaking down visibly month by month ;

and one might fancy that the eminent Christian divine might have used his influence to better purpose than in fanning the dying flame, and adding the strokes of his bludgeon to the keen stabs of Pope's stiletto. In the fourteen years which had elapsed since the first Dunciad, Pope had found less unworthy employment for his pen ; but, before dealing with the works produced at this time, which include some of his highest achievements, I must tell a story which is in some ways a natural supplement to the war with the dunces. In describing Pope's entangled history, it seems most convenient to follow each separate line of discharge of his multifarious energy, rather than to adhere to chronological order.

CHAPTER VI.¹

CORRESPONDENCE.

I HAVE now to describe one of the most singular series of transactions to be found in the annals of literature. A complete knowledge of their various details has only been obtained by recent researches. I cannot follow within my limits of space all the ins and outs of the complicated labyrinth of more than diplomatic trickery which those researches have revealed, though I hope to render the main facts sufficiently intelligible. It is painful to track the strange deceptions of a man of genius as a detective unravels the misdeeds of an accomplished swindler ; but without telling the story at some length, it is impossible to give a faithful exhibition of Pope's character.

In the year 1726, when Pope had just finished his labours upon Homer, Curll published the juvenile letters to Cromwell. There was no mystery about this transaction. Curll was the chief of all piratical booksellers, and versed in every dirty trick of the Grub-street trade. He is described in that mad book, Amory's *John Bunce*, as tall, thin, ungainly, white-faced, with light grey goggles

¹ The evidence by which the statements in this chapter are supported is fully set forth in Mr. Elwin's edition of Pope's Works, Vol. 1 and in the notes to the Orrery Correspondence in the third volume of letters.

eyes, purblind, splay-footed, and "baker-kneel." According to the same queer authority, who professes to have lodged in Curll's house, he was drunk, as often as he could drink for nothing, and intimate in every London haunt of vice. "His translators lay three in a bed at the Pewter Platter Inn in Holborn," and helped to compile his indecent, piratical, and catchpenny productions. He had lost his ears for some obscene publication; but Amory adds, "to his glory," that he died "as great a penitent as ever expired." He had one strong point as an antagonist. Having no character to lose, he could reveal his own practices without a blush, if the revelation injured others.

Pope had already come into collision with this awkward antagonist. In 1716 Curll threatened to publish the *Town Eclogues*, burlesques upon Ambrose Philips, written by Lady Mary, with the help of Pope and perhaps Gay. Pope, with Lintot, had a meeting with Curll in the hopes of suppressing a publication calculated to injure his friends. The party had some wine, and Curll on going home was very sick. He declared—and there are reasons for believing his story—that Pope had given him an emetic, by way of coarse practical joke. Pope, at any rate, took advantage of the accident to write a couple of squibs upon Curll, recording the bookseller's ravings under the action of the drug, as he had described the ravings of Dennis provoked by Cato. Curll had his revenge afterwards; but meanwhile he wanted no extraneous motive to induce him to publish the *Cromwell* letters. Cromwell had given the letters to a mistress, who fell into distress and sold them to Curll for ten guineas.

The correspondence was received with some favour, and suggested to Pope a new mode of gratifying his vanity. An occasion soon offered itself. Theobald, the hero of

the *Dunciad*, edited in 1728 the posthumous works of Wycherley. Pope extracted from this circumstance a far-fetched excuse for publishing the Wycherley correspondence. He said that it was due to Wycherley's memory to prove, by the publication of their correspondence, that the posthumous publication of the works was opposed to their author's wishes. As a matter of fact the letters have no tendency to prove anything of the kind, or rather, they support the opposite theory; but poor Pope was always a hand-to-mouth har, and took the first pretext that offered, without caring for consistency or confirmation. His next step was to write to his friend, Lord Oxford, son of Queen Anne's minister. Oxford was a weak, good-natured man. By cultivating a variety of expensive tastes, without the knowledge to guide them, he managed to run through a splendid fortune and die in embarrassment. His famous library was one of his special hobbies. Pope now applied to him to allow the Wycherley letters to be deposited in the library, and further requested that the fact of their being in this quasi-public place might be mentioned in the preface as a guarantee of their authenticity. Oxford consented, and Pope quietly took a further step without authority. He told Oxford that he had decided to make his publishers say that copies of the letters had been obtained from Lord Oxford. He told the same story to Swift, speaking of the "connivance" of his noble friend, and adding that, though he did not himself "much approve" of the publication, he was not ashamed of it. He thus ingeniously intimated that the correspondence, which he had himself carefully prepared and sent to press, had been printed without his consent by the officious zeal of Oxford and the booksellers.

The book (which was called the second volume of Wycherley's works) has entirely disappeared. It was advertised at the time, but not a single copy is known to exist. One cause of this disappearance now appears to be that it had no sale at first, and that Pope preserved the sheets for use in a more elaborate device which followed. Oxford probably objected to the misuse of his name, as the fiction which made him responsible was afterwards dropped. Pope found, or thought that he had found, on the next occasion, a more convenient cat's-paw. Curll, it could not be doubted, would snatch at any chance of publishing more correspondence ; and, as Pope was anxious to have his letters stolen and Curll was ready to steal, the one thing necessary was a convenient go-between, who could be disowned or altogether concealed. Pope went systematically to work. He began by writing to his friends, begging them to return his letters. After Curll's piracy, he declared, he could not feel himself safe, and should be unhappy till he had the letters in his own custody. Letters were sent in, though in some cases with reluctance ; and Caryll, in particular, who had the largest number, privately took copies before returning them (a measure which ultimately secured the detection of many of Pope's manœuvres). This, however, was unknown to Pope. He had the letters copied out ; after (according to his own stating) burning three-fourths of them, and (as we are now aware) carefully editing the remainder, he had the copy deposited in Lord Oxford's library. His object was, as he said, partly to have documents ready in case of the revival of scandals, and partly to preserve the memory of his friendships. The next point was to get these letters stolen. For this purpose he created a man of straw, a mysterious "P. T.," who could be personated on occasion

by some of the underlings employed in the underground transactions connected with the Dunciad and the Grubstreet Journal. P. T. began by writing to Curll in 1733, and offering to sell him a collection of Pope's letters. The negotiation went off for a time, because P. T. insisted upon Curll's first committing himself by publishing an advertisement, declaring himself to be already in possession of the originals. Curll was too wary to commit himself to such a statement, which would have made him responsible for the theft; or, perhaps, have justified Pope in publishing the originals in self-defence. The matter slept till March 1735, when Curll wrote to Pope proposing a cessation of hostilities, and as a proof of goodwill sending him the old P. T. advertisement. This step fell in so happily with Pope's designs that it has been suggested that Curll was prompted in some indirect manner by one of Pope's agents. Pope, at any rate, turned it to account. He at once published an insulting advertisement. Curll (he said in this manifesto) had pretended to have had the offer from P. T. of a large collection of Pope's letters; Pope knew nothing of P. T., believed the letters to be forgeries, and would take no more trouble in the matter. Whilst Curll was presumably smarting under this summary slap on the face, the insidious P. T. stepped in once more. P. T. now said that he was in possession of the printed sheets of the correspondence, and the negotiation went on swimmingly. Curll put out the required advertisement; a "short, squat" man, in a clergyman's gown and with barrister's bands, calling himself Smythe, came to his house at night as P. T.'s agent, and showed him some printed sheets and original letters; the bargain was struck; 240 copies of the book were delivered, and it was published on May 12th.

So far the plot had succeeded. Pope had printed his own correspondence, and had tricked Curll into publishing the book piratically, whilst the public was quite prepared to believe that Curll had performed a new piratical feat. Pope, however, was now bound to shriek as loudly as he could at the outrage under which he was suffering. He should have been prepared also to answer an obvious question. Every one would naturally inquire how Curll had procured the letters, which by Pope's own account were safely deposited in Lord Oxford's library. Without, as it would seem, properly weighing the difficulty of meeting this demand, Pope called out loudly for vengeance. When the *Dunciad* appeared, he had applied (as I have said) for an injunction in Chancery, and had at the same time secured the failure of his application. The same device was tried in a still more imposing fashion. The House of Lords had recently decided that it was a breach of privilege to publish a peer's letters without his consent. Pope availed himself of this rule to fire the most sounding of blank shots across the path of the piratical Curll. He was as anxious to allow the publication, as to demand its suppression in the most emphatic manner. Accordingly he got his friend, Lord Ilay, to call the attention of the peers to Curll's advertisement, which was so worded as to imply that there were in the book letters from, as well as to, peers. Pope himself attended the house "to stimulate the resentment of his friends." The book was at once seized by a messenger, and Curll ordered to attend the next day. But on examination it immediately turned out that it contained no letters from peers, and the whole farce would have ended at once but for a further trick. Lord Ilay said that a certain letter to Jervas contained a reflection upon Lord Burlington. Now the letter was found in a

first batch of fifty copies sent to Curll, and which had been sold before the appearance of the Lords' messenger. But the letter had been suppressed in a second batch of 190 copies, which the messenger was just in time to seize. Pope had of course foreseen and prepared this result.

The whole proceeding in the Lords was thus rendered abortive. The books were restored to Curll, and the sale continued. But the device meanwhile had recoiled upon its author, the very danger against which he should have guarded himself had now occurred. How were the letters procured? Not till Curll was coming up for examination does it seem to have occurred to Pope that the Lords would inevitably ask the awkward question. He then saw that Curll's answer might lead to a discovery. He wrote a letter to Curll (in Smythe's name) intended to meet the difficulty. He entreated Curll to take the whole of the responsibility of procuring the letters upon himself, and by way of inducement held out hopes of another volume of correspondence. In a second note he tried to throw Curll off the scent of another significant little fact. The sheets (as I have mentioned) were partly made up from the volume of Wycherley correspondence;^{*} this would give a clue to further inquiries; P. T. therefore allowed Smythe to say (ostensibly to show his confidence in Curll) that he (P. T.) had been employed in getting up the former volume, and had had some additional sheets struck off for himself, to which he had added letters subsequently obtained. The letter was a signal blunder. Curll saw at once that it put the game in his hands. He was not going to tell lies to please the slippery P. T.,

^{*} This is proved by a note referring to "the present edition of the posthumous works of Mr. Wycherley," which, by an oversight, was allowed to remain in the Curll volume

or the short squat lawyer-clergyman. He had begun to see through the whole manœuvre. He went straight off to the Lords' committee, told the whole story, and produced as a voucher the letters in which P. T. begged for secrecy. Curll's word was good for little by itself, but his story hung together and the letter confirmed it. And if, as now seemed clear, Curll was speaking the truth, the question remained, who was P. T., and how did he get the letters? The answer, as Pope must have felt, was only too clear.

But Curll now took the offensive. In reply to another letter from Smythe, complaining of his evidence, he went roundly to work ; he said that he should at once publish all the correspondence. P. T. had prudently asked for the return of his letters ; but Curll had kept copies, and was prepared to swear to their fidelity. Accordingly he soon advertised what was called the *Initial Correspondence*. Pope was now caught in his own trap. He had tried to avert suspicion by publicly offering a reward to Smythe and P. T., if they would "discover the whole affair." The letters, as he admitted, must have been procured either from his own library or from Lord Oxford's. The correspondence to be published by Curll would help to identify the mysterious appropriators, and whatever excuses could be made ought now to be forthcoming. Pope adopted a singular plan. It was announced that the clergyman concerned with P. T. and Curll had "discovered the whole transaction." A narrative was forthwith published to anticipate Curll and to clear up the mystery. If good for anything, it should have given, or helped to give, the key to the great puzzle—the mode of obtaining the letters. There was nothing else for Smythe or P. T. to "discover." Readers must

have been strangely disappointed on finding not a single word to throw light upon this subject, and merely a long account of the negotiations between Curll and P. T. The narrative might serve to distract attention from the main point, which it clearly did nothing to elucidate. But Curll now stated his own case. He reprinted the narrative with some pungent notes ; he gave in full some letters omitted by P. T., and he added a story which was most unpleasantly significant. P. T. had spoken, as I have said, of his connexion with the Wycherley volume. The object of this statement was to get rid of an awkward bit of evidence. But Curll now announced, on the authority of Gilliver, the publisher of the volume, that Pope had himself bought up the remaining sheets. The inference was clear. Unless the story could be contradicted, and it never was, Pope was himself the thief. The sheets common to the two volumes had been traced to his possession. Nor was there a word in the P. T. narrative to diminish the force of these presumptions. Indeed it was curiously inconsistent, for it vaguely accused Curll of stealing the letters himself, whilst in the same breath it told how he had bought them from P. T. In fact, P. T. was beginning to resolve himself into thin air, like the phantom in the Dunciad. As he vanished, it required no great acuteness to distinguish behind him the features of his ingenious creator. It was already believed at the time that the whole affair was an elaborate contrivance of Pope's, and subsequent revelations have demonstrated the truth of the hypothesis. Even the go-between, Smythe, was identified as one James Worsdale, a painter, actor, and author, of the Bohemian variety.

Though Curll had fairly won the game, and Pope's

intrigue was even at the time sufficiently exposed, it seems to have given less scandal than might have been expected. Probably it was suspected only in literary circles, and perhaps it might be thought that, silly as was the elaborate device, the disreputable Curll was fair game for his natural enemy. Indeed, such is the irony of fate, Pope won credit with simple people. The effect of the publication, as Johnson tells us, was to fill the nation with praises of the admirable moral qualities revealed in Pope's letters. Amongst the admirers was Ralph Allen, who had made a large fortune by farming the cross-posts. His princely benevolence and sterling worth were universally admitted, and have been immortalized by the best contemporary judge of character. He was the original of Fielding's Allworthy. Like that excellent person, he seems to have had the common weakness of good men in taking others too easily at their own valuation. Pope imposed upon him just as Blifil imposed upon his representative. He was so much pleased with the correspondence, that he sought Pope's acquaintance, and offered to publish a genuine edition at his own expense. An authoritative edition appeared accordingly in 1737. Pope preferred to publish by subscription, which does not seem to have filled very rapidly, though the work ultimately made a fair profit. Pope's underhand manœuvres were abundantly illustrated in the history of this new edition. It is impossible to give the details; but I may briefly state that he was responsible for a nominally spurious edition which appeared directly after, and was simply a reproduction of, Curll's publication. Although he complained of the garbling and interpolations supposed to have been due to the wicked Curll or the phantom P. T., and although he omitted in his

avowed edition certain letters which had given offence, he nevertheless substantially reproduced in it Curll's version of the letters. As this differs from the originals which have been preserved, Pope thus gave an additional proof that he was really responsible for Curll's supposed garbling. This evidence was adduced with conclusive force by Bowles in a later controversy, and would be enough by itself to convict Pope of the imputed deception. Finally, it may be added that Pope's delay in producing his own edition is explained by the fact that it contained many falsifications of his correspondence with Caryll, and that he delayed the acknowledgment of the genuine character of the letters until Caryll's death removed the danger of detection.

The whole of this elaborate machinery was devised in order that Pope might avoid the ridicule of publishing his own correspondence. There had been few examples of a similar publication of private letters; and Pope's volume, according to Johnson, did not attract very much attention. This is, perhaps, hardly consistent with Johnson's other assertion that it filled the nation with praises of his virtue. In any case it stimulated his appetite for such praises, and led him to a fresh intrigue, more successful and also more disgraceful. The device originally adopted in publishing the *Dunciad* apparently suggested part of the new plot. The letters hitherto published did not include the most interesting correspondence in which Pope had been engaged. He had been in the habit of writing to Swift since their first acquaintance, and Bolingbroke had occasionally joined him. These letters, which connected Pope with two of his most famous contemporaries, would be far more interesting than the letters to Cromwell or Wycherley, or even than the letters addressed

to Addison and Steele, which were mere stilted fabrications. How could they be got before the world, and in such a way as to conceal his own complicity?

Pope had told Swift (in 1730) that he had kept some of the letters in a volume for his own secret satisfaction; and Swift had preserved all Pope's letters along with those of other distinguished men. Here was an attractive booty for such parties as the unprincipled Curll! In 1735 Curll had committed his wicked piracy, and Pope pressed Swift to return his letters, in order to "secure him against that rascal printer." The entreaties were often renewed, but Swift for some reason turned his deaf ear to the suggestion. He promised, indeed (Sept. 3, 1735), that the letters should be burnt—a most effectual security against republication, but one not at all to Pope's taste. Pope then admitted that, having been forced to publish some of his other letters, he should like to make use of some of those to Swift, as none would be more honourable to him. Nay, he says, he meant to erect such a minute monument of their friendship as would put to shame all ancient memorials of the same kind.³ This avowal of his intention to publish did not conciliate Swift. Curll next published in 1736 a couple of letters to Swift, and Pope took advantage of this publication (perhaps he had indirectly supplied Curll with copies) to urge upon Swift the insecurity of the letters in his keeping. Swift ignored the request, and his letters about this time began to show that his memory was failing and his intellect growing weak.

³ These expressions come from two letters of Pope to Lord Orrery in March, 1737, and may not accurately reproduce his statements to Swift; but they probably represent approximately what he had said.

Pope now applied to their common friend Lord Orrery. Orrery was the dull member of a family eminent for its talents. His father had left a valuable library to Christ Church, ostensibly because the son was not capable of profiting by books, though a less creditable reason has been assigned.⁴ The son, eager to wipe off the imputation, specially affected the society of wits, and was elaborately polite both to Swift and Pope. Pope now got Orrery to intercede with Swift, urging that the letters were no longer safe in the custody of a failing old man. Orrery succeeded, and brought the letters in a sealed packet to Pope in the summer of 1737. Swift, it must be added, had an impression that there was a gap of six years in the collection; he became confused as to what had or had not been sent, and had a vague belief in a "great collection" of letters "placed in some very safe hand."⁵ Pope, being thus in possession of the whole correspondence, proceeded to perform a manœuvre resembling those already employed in the case of the *Dunciad* and of the P. T. letters. He printed the correspondence clandestinely. He then sent the printed volume to Swift, accompanied by an anonymous letter. This letter purported to come from some persons who, from admiration of Swift's private and public virtues, had resolved to preserve letters so creditable to him, and had accordingly put them in type. They suggested that the volume would be suppressed if it fell into the hands of Bolingbroke and Pope (a most audacious suggestion!), and intimated that Swift should himself publish it. No other copy, they said, was in exis-

⁴ It is said that the son objected to allow his wife to meet his father's mistress.

⁵ See Elwin's edition of Pope's Correspondence, iii., 399, note.

tence. Poor Swift fell at once into the trap. He ought, of course, to have consulted Pope or Bolingbroke, and would probably have done so had his mind been sound. Seeing, however, a volume already printed, he might naturally suppose that, in spite of the anonymous assurance, it was already too late to stop the publication. At any rate, he at once sent it to his publisher, Faulkner, and desired him to bring it out at once. Swift was in that most melancholy state in which a man's friends perceive him to be incompetent to manage his affairs, and are yet not able to use actual restraint. Mrs. Whiteway, the sensible and affectionate cousin who took care of him at this time, did her best to protest against the publication, but in vain. Swift insisted. So far Pope's device was successful. The printed letters had been placed in the hands of his bookseller by Swift himself, and publication was apparently secured. But Pope had still the same problem as in the previous case. Though he had talked of erecting a monument to Swift and himself, he was anxious that the monument should apparently be erected by some one else. His vanity could only be satisfied by the appearance that the publication was forced upon him. He had, therefore, to dissociate himself from the publication by some protest at once emphatic and ineffectual; and, consequently, to explain the means by which the letters had been surreptitiously obtained.

The first aim was unexpectedly difficult. Faulkner turned out to be an honest bookseller. Instead of sharing Curl's rapacity, he consented, at Mrs. Whiteway's request, to wait until Pope had an opportunity of expressing his wishes. Pope, if he consented, could no longer complain; if he dissented, Faulkner would suppress the

letters. In this dilemma, Pope first wrote to Faulkner to refuse permission, and at the same time took care that his letter should be delayed for a month. He hoped that Faulkner would lose patience, and publish. But Faulkner, with provoking civility, stopped the press as soon as he heard of Pope's objection. Pope hereupon discovered that the letters were certain to be published, as they were already printed, and doubtless by some mysterious "confederacy of people" in London. All he could wish was to revise them before appearance. Meanwhile he begged Lord Orrery to inspect the book, and say what he thought of it. "Guess in what a situation I must be," exclaimed this sincere and modest person, "not to be able to see what all the world is to read as mine." Orrery was quite as provoking as Faulkner. He got the book from Faulkner, read it, and instead of begging Pope not to deprive the world of so delightful a treat, said with dull integrity, that he thought the collection "unworthy to be published." Orrery, however, was innocent enough to accept Pope's suggestion, that letters which had once got into such hands would certainly come out sooner or later. After some more haggling, Pope ultimately decided to take this ground. He would, he said, have nothing to do with the letters, they would come out in any case; their appearance would please the Dean, and he (Pope) would stand clear of all responsibility. He tried, indeed, to get Faulkner to prefix a statement tending to fix the whole transaction upon Swift; but the bookseller declined, and the letters ultimately came out with a simple statement that they were a reprint.

Pope had thus virtually sanctioned the publication. He was not the less emphatic in complaining of it to his friends. To Orrery, who knew the facts, he represented

the printed copy sent to Swift as a proof that the letters were beyond his power ; and to others, such as his friend Allen, he kept silence as to this copy altogether ; and gave them to understand that poor Swift—or some member of Swift's family—was the prime mover in the business. His mystification had, as before, driven him into perplexities upon which he had never calculated. In fact, it was still more difficult here than in the previous case to account for the original misappropriation of the letters. Who could the thief have been? Orrery, as we have seen, had himself taken a packet of letters to Pope, which would be of course the letters from Pope to Swift. The packet being sealed, Orrery did not know the contents, and Pope asserted that he had burnt it almost as soon as received. It was, however, true that Swift had been in the habit of showing the originals to his friends, and some might possibly have been stolen or copied by designing people. But this would not account for the publication of Swift's letters to Pope, which had never been out of Pope's possession. As he had certainly been in possession of the other letters, it was easiest, even for himself, to suppose that some of his own servants were the guilty persons ; his own honour being, of course, beyond question.

To meet these difficulties, Pope made great use of some stray phrases dropped by Swift in the decline of his memory, and set up a story of his having himself returned some letters to Swift, of which important fact all traces had disappeared. One characteristic device will be a sufficient specimen. Swift wrote that a great collection of "*my* letters to *you*" is somewhere "in a safe hand." He meant, of course, "a collection of *your* letters to *me*"—the only letters of which he could know anything. Ob-

serving the slip of the pen, he altered the phrase by writing the correct words above the line. It now stood—"your ^{my} letters to ^{me} you." Pope laid great stress upon this, interpreting it to mean that the "great collection" included letters from each correspondent to the other—the fact being that Swift had only the letters from Pope to himself. The omission of an erasure (whether by Swift or Pope) caused the whole meaning to be altered. As the great difficulty was to explain the publication of Swift's letters to Pope, this change supplied a very important link in the evidence. It implied that Swift had been at some time in possession of the letters in question, and had trusted them to some one supposed to be safe. The whole paragraph, meanwhile, appears, from the unimpeachable evidence of Mrs. Whiteway, to have involved one of the illusions of memory, for which he (Swift) apologizes in the letter from which this is extracted. By insisting upon this passage, and upon certain other letters dexterously confounded with those published, Pope succeeded in raising dust enough to blind Lord Orrery's not very piercing intelligence. The inference which he desired to suggest was that some persons in Swift's family had obtained possession of the letters. Mrs. Whiteway, indeed, met the suggestion so clearly, and gave such good reasons for assigning Twickenham as the probable centre of the plot, that she must have suspected the truth. Pope did not venture to assail her publicly, though he continued to talk of treachery or evil influence.

To accuse innocent people of a crime which you know yourself to have committed is bad enough. It is, perhaps, even baser to lay a trap for a friend, and reproach him for falling into it. Swift had denied the publication of

the letters, and Pope would have had some grounds of complaint had he not been aware of the failure of Swift's mind, and had he not been himself the tempter. His position, however, forced him to blame his friend. It was a necessary part of his case to impute at least a breach of confidence to his victim. He therefore took the attitude—it must, one hopes, have cost him a blush—of one who is seriously aggrieved, but who is generously anxious to shield a friend in consideration of his known infirmity. He is forced, in sorrow, to admit that Swift has erred, but he will not allow himself to be annoyed. The most humiliating words ever written by a man not utterly vile, must have been those which Pope set down in a letter to Nugent, after giving his own version of the case: "I think I can make no reflections upon this strange incident but what are truly melancholy, and humble the pride of human nature. That the greatest of geniuses, though prudence may have been the companion of wit (which is very rare) for their whole lives past, may have nothing left them but their vanity. No decay of body is half so miserable." The most audacious hypocrite of fiction pales beside this. Pope, condescending to the meanest complication of lies to justify a paltry vanity, taking advantage of his old friend's dotage to trick him into complicity, then giving a false account of his error, and finally moralizing, with all the airs of philosophic charity, and taking credit for his generosity, is altogether a picture to set fiction at defiance.

I must add a remark not so edifying. Pope went down to his grave soon afterwards, without exciting suspicion except among two or three people intimately concerned. A whisper of doubt was soon hushed. Even the biographers who were on the track of his former

deception did not suspect this similar iniquity. The last of them, Mr. Carruthers, writing in 1857, observes upon the pain given to Pope by the treachery of Swift—a treachery of course palliated by Swift's failure of mind. At last Mr. Dilke discovered the truth, which has been placed beyond doubt by the still later discovery of the letters to Orrery. The moral is, apparently, that it is better to cheat a respectable man than a rogue; for the respectable tacitly form a society for mutual support of character, whilst the open rogue will be only too glad to show that you are even such an one as himself.

It was not probable that letters thus published should be printed with scrupulous accuracy. Pope, indeed, can scarcely have attempted to conceal the fact that they had been a good deal altered. And so long as the letters were regarded merely as literary compositions, the practice was at least pardonable. But Pope went further; and the full extent of his audacious changes was not seen until Mr. Dilke became possessed of the Caryll correspondence. On comparing the copies preserved by Caryll with the letters published by Pope, it became evident that Pope had regarded these letters as so much raw material, which he might carve into shape at pleasure, and with such alterations of date and address as might be convenient, to the confusion of all biographers and editors ignorant of his peculiar method of editing. The details of these very disgraceful falsifications have been fully described by Mr. Elwin,* but I turn gladly from this lamentable narrative to say something of the literary value of the correspondence. Every critic has made the obvious remark that Pope's letters are artificial and self-conscious. Pope claimed the opposite merit. "It is many years," he says to Swift in

* Pope's Works, vol. i. p. cxx

1734, "since I wrote as a wit." He smiles to think "how Curll would be bit were our epistles to fall into his hands, and how gloriously they would fall short of every ingenious reader's anticipations." Warburton adds in a note that Pope used to "value himself upon this particular." It is indeed true that Pope had dropped the boyish affectation of his letters to Wycherley and Cromwell. But such a statement in the mouth of a man who plotted to secure Curll's publication of his letters, with devices elaborate enough to make the reputation of an unscrupulous diplomatist, is of course only one more example of the superlative degree of affectation, the affectation of being unaffected. We should be indeed disappointed were we to expect in Pope's letters what we find in the best specimens of the art: the charm which belongs to a simple outpouring of friendly feeling in private intercourse; the sweet playfulness of Cowper, or the grave humour of Gray, or even the sparkle and brilliance of Walpole's admirable letters. Though Walpole had an eye to posterity, and has his own mode of affectation, he is for the moment intent on amusing, and is free from the most annoying blemish in Pope's writing, the resolution to appear always in full dress, and to mount as often as possible upon the stilts of moral self-approbation. All this is obvious to the hasty reader; and yet I must confess my own conviction that there is scarcely a more interesting volume in the language than that which contains the correspondence of Swift, Bolingbroke, and Pope. To enjoy it, indeed, we must not expect to be in sympathy with the writers. Rather we must adopt the mental attitude of spectators of a scene of high comedy—the comedy which is dashed with satire and has a tragical side to it. We are behind the scenes in *Vanity Fair*, and listening to the talk of three of its most famous per-

formers, doubting whether they most deceive each other or the public or themselves. The secret is an open one for us, now that the illusion which perplexed contemporaries has worn itself threadbare.

The most impressive letters are undoubtedly those of Swift--the stern sad humourist, frowning upon the world which has rejected him, and covering his wrath with an affectation, not of fine sentiment, but of misanthropy. A soured man prefers to turn his worst side outwards. There are phrases in his letters which brand themselves upon the memory like those of no other man; and we are softened into pity as the strong mind is seen gradually sinking into decay. The two other sharers in the colloquy are in effective contrast. We see through Bolingbroke's magnificent self-deceit; the flowing manners of the statesman who, though the game is lost, is longing for a favourable turn of the card, but still affects to solace himself with philosophy, and wraps himself in dignified reflections upon the blessings of retirement, contrast with Swift's downright avowal of indignant scorn for himself and mankind. And yet we have a sense of the man's amazing cleverness, and regret that he has no chance of trying one more fall with his antagonists in the open arena. Pope's affectation is perhaps the most transparent and the most gratuitous. His career had been pre-eminently successful, his talents had found their natural outlet; and he had only to be what he apparently persuaded himself that he was, to be happy in spite of illness. He is constantly flourishing his admirable moral sense in our faces, dilating upon his simplicity, modesty, fidelity to his friends, indifference to the charms of fame, till we are almost convinced that he has imposed upon himself. By some strange piece of legerdemain he must surely have succeeded in regarding even his deliberate artifices, with

the astonishing masses of hypocritical falsehoods which they entailed, as in some way legitimate weapons against a world full of piratical Curlls and deep laid plots. And, indeed, with all his delinquencies, and with all his affectations, there are moments in which we forget to preserve the correct tone of moral indignation. Every now and then genuine feeling seems to come to the surface. For a time the superincumbent masses of hypocrisy vanish. In speaking of his mother or his pursuits he forgets to wear his mask. He feels a genuine enthusiasm about his friends, he believes with almost pathetic earnestness in the amazing talents of Bolingbroke, and the patriotic devotion of the younger men who are rising up to overthrow the corruptions of Walpole; he takes the affectation of his friends as seriously as a simple minded man who has never fairly realized the possibility of deliberate hypocrisy; and he utters sentiments about human life and its objects which, if a little tainted with commonplace, have yet a certain ring of sincerity and, as we may believe, were really sincere for the time. At such moments we seem to see the man behind the veil—the really loveable nature which could know as well as simulate feeling. And, indeed, it is this quality which makes Pope endurable. He was—if we must speak bluntly—a liar and a hypocrite, but the foundation of his character was not selfish or grovelling. On the contrary, no man could be more warmly affectionate or more exquisitely sensitive to many noble emotions. The misfortune was that his constitutional infirmities, acted upon by unfavourable conditions, developed his craving for applause and his fear of censure, till certain morbid tendencies in him assumed proportions which, compared to the same weaknesses in ordinary mankind, are as the growth of plants in a tropical forest to their stunted representatives in the North.

CHAPTER VII.

THE ESSAY ON MAN.

It is a relief to turn from this miserable record of Pope's petty or malicious deceptions to the history of his legitimate career. I go back to the period when he was still in full power. Having finished the *Dunciad*, he was soon employed on a more ambitious task. Pope resembled one of the inferior bodies of the solar system, whose orbit is dependent upon that of some more massive planet; and having been a satellite of Swift, he was now swept into the train of the more imposing Bolingbroke. He had been originally introduced to Bolingbroke by Swift, but had probably seen little of the brilliant minister who, in the first years of their acquaintance, had too many occupations to give much time to the rising poet. Bolingbroke, however, had been suffering a long eclipse, whilst Pope was gathering fresh splendour. In his exile, Bolingbroke, though never really weaned from political ambition, had amused himself with superficial philosophical studies. In political life it was his special glory to extemporize statesmanship without sacrificing pleasure. He could be at once the most reckless of rakes and the leading spirit in the Cabinet or the House of Commons. He seems to have thought that philosophical eminence was obtainable in the same offhand fashion, and that a brilliant style

would justify a man in laying down the law to metaphysicians as well as to diplomatists and politicians. His philosophical writings are equally superficial and arrogant, though they show here and there the practised debater's power of making a good point against his antagonist without really grasping the real problems at issue.

Bolingbroke received a pardon in 1723, and returned to England, crossing Atterbury, who had just been convicted of treasonable practices. In 1725 Bolingbroke settled at Dawley, near Uxbridge, and for the next ten years he was alternately amusing himself in playing the retired philosopher, and endeavouring, with more serious purpose, to animate the opposition to Walpole. Pope, who was his frequent guest, sympathized with his schemes, and was completely dazzled by his eminence. He spoke of him with bated breath, as a being almost superior to humanity. "It looks," said Pope once, "as if that great man had been placed here by mistake. When the comet appeared a month or two ago," he added, "I sometimes fancied that it might be come to carry him home, as a coach comes to one's door for other visitors." Of all the graceful compliments in Pope's poetry, none are more ardent or more obviously sincere than those addressed to this "guide, philosopher, and friend." He delighted to bask in the sunshine of the great man's presence. Writing to Swift in 1728, he (Pope) says that he is holding the pen "for my Lord Bolingbroke," who is reading your letter between two haycocks, with his attention occasionally distracted by a threatening shower. Bolingbroke is acting the temperate recluse, having nothing for dinner but mutton-broth, beans and bacon, and a barndoor fowl. Whilst his lordship is running after a cart, Pope snatches a moment to tell how the day before this noble farmer had

engaged a painter for 200*l.* to give the correct agricultural air to his country hall by ornamenting it with trophies of spades, rakes, and prongs. Pope saw that the zeal for retirement was not free from affectation, but he sat at the teacher's feet with profound belief in the value of the lessons which flowed from his lips.

The connexion was to bear remarkable fruit. Under the direction of Bolingbroke, Pope resolved to compose a great philosophical poem. "Does Pope talk to you," says Bolingbroke to Swift in 1731, "of the noble work which, at my instigation, he has begun in such a manner that he must be convinced by this time I judged better of his talents than he did?" And Bolingbroke proceeds to describe the *Essay on Man*, of which it seems that three (out of four) epistles were now finished. The first of these epistles appeared in 1733. Pope, being apparently nervous on his first appearance as a philosopher, withheld his name. The other parts followed in the course of 1733 and 1734, and the authorship was soon avowed. The *Essay on Man* is Pope's most ambitious performance, and the one by which he was best known beyond his own country. It has been frequently translated, it was imitated both in France and Germany, and provoked a controversy, not like others in Pope's history of the purely personal kind.

The *Essay on Man* professes to be a theodicy. Pope, with an echo of the Miltonic phrase, proposes to

Vindicate the ways of God to man

He is thus attempting the greatest task to which poet or philosopher can devote himself—the exhibition of an organic and harmonious view of the universe. In a time when men's minds are dominated by a definite religious

creed, the poet may hope to achieve success in such an undertaking without departing from his legitimate method. His vision pierces to the world hidden from our senses, and realizes in the transitory present a scene in the slow development of a divine drama. To make us share his vision is to give his justification of Providence. When Milton told the story of the war in heaven and the fall of man, he gave implicitly his theory of the true relations of man to his Creator, but the abstract doctrine was clothed in the flesh and blood of a concrete mythology.

In Pope's day the traditional belief had lost its hold upon men's minds too completely to be used for imaginative purposes. The story of Adam and Eve would itself require to be justified or to be rationalized into thin allegory. Nothing was left possessed of any vitality but a bare skeleton of abstract theology, dependent upon argument instead of tradition, and which might use or might dispense with a Christian phraseology. Its deity was not a historical personage, but the name of a metaphysical conception. For a revelation was substituted a demonstration. To vindicate Providence meant no longer to stimulate imagination by pure and sublime rendering of accepted truths, but to solve certain philosophical problems, and especially the grand difficulty of reconciling the existence of evil with divine omnipotence and benevolence.

Pope might conceivably have written a really great poem on these terms, though deprived of the concrete imagery of a Dante or a Milton. If he had fairly grasped some definite conception of the universe, whether pantheistic or atheistic, optimist or pessimist, proclaiming a solution of the mystery, or declaring all solutions to be impossible, he might have given forcible expression to the

corresponding emotions. He might have uttered the melancholy resignation and the confident hope incited in different minds by a contemplation of the mysterious world. He might again conceivably have written an interesting work, though it would hardly have been a poem — if he had versified the arguments by which a coherent theory might be supported. Unluckily, he was quite unqualified for either undertaking, and, at the same time, he more or less aimed at both. Anything like sustained reasoning was beyond his reach. Pope felt and thought by shocks and electric flashes. He could only obtain a continuous effect when working clearly upon lines already provided for him, or simulate one by fitting together fragments struck out at intervals. The defect was aggravated or caused by the physical infirmities which put sustained intellectual labour out of the question. The laborious and patient meditation which brings a converging series of arguments to bear upon a single point, was to him as impossible as the power of devising an elaborate strategical combination to a dashing Prince Rupert. The reasonings in the Essay are confused, contradictory, and often childish. He was equally far from having assimilated any definite system of thought. Brought up as a Catholic, he had gradually swung into vague deistic belief. But he had never studied any philosophy or theology whatever, and he accepts in perfect unconsciousness fragments of the most heterogeneous systems.

Swift, in verses from which I have already quoted, describes his method of composition, which is characteristic of Pope's habits of work.

Now backs of letters, though design'd
For those who more will need 'em,
Are fill'd with hints and interlined,
Himself can scarcely read 'em

Each atom by some other struck
All turns and motions tries ;
Till in a lump together stuck
Behold a poem rise !

It was strange enough that any poem should arise by such means ; but it would have been miraculous if a poem so constructed had been at once a demonstration and an exposition of a harmonious philosophical system. The confession which he made to Warburton will be a sufficient indication of his qualifications as a student. He says (in 1739) that he never in his life read a line of Leibnitz, nor knew, till he found it in a confutation of his Essay, that there was such a term as pre-established harmony. That is almost as if a modern reconciler of faith and science were to say that he had never read a line of Mr. Darwin, or heard of such a phrase as the struggle for existence. It was to pronounce himself absolutely disqualified to speak as a philosopher.

How, then, could Pope obtain even an appearance of success ? The problem should puzzle no one at the present day. Every smart essayist knows how to settle the most abstruse metaphysical puzzles after studies limited to the pages of a monthly magazine ; and Pope was much in the state of mind of such extemporizing philosophers. He had dipped into the books which everybody read ; Locke's Essay, and Shaftesbury's Characteristics, and Wollaston's Religion of Nature, and Clarke on the Attributes, and Archbishop King on the Origin of Evil, had probably amused his spare moments. They were all, we may suppose, in Bolingbroke's library ; and if that passing shower commemorated in Pope's letter drove them back to the house, Bolingbroke might discourse from the page which happened to be open, and Pope would try to

versify it on the back of an envelope.' Nor must we forget, like some of his commentators, that after all Pope was an exceedingly clever man. His rapidly perceptive mind was fully qualified to imbibe the crude versions of philosophic theories which float upon the surface of ordinary talk, and are not always so inferior to their prototypes in philosophic qualities, as philosophers would have us believe. He could by snatches seize with admirable quickness the general spirit of a doctrine, though unable to sustain himself at a high intellectual level for any length of time. He was ready with abundance of poetical illustrations, not, perhaps, very closely adapted to the logic, but capable of being elaborated into effective passages, and, finally, Pope had always a certain number of more or less appropriate commonplaces or renderings into verse of some passages which had struck him in Pascal, or Rochefoucauld, or Bacon, all of them favourite authors, and which could be wrought into the structure at a slight cost of coherence. By such means he could put together a poem, which was certainly not an organic whole, but which might contain many striking sayings and passages of great rhetorical effect.

The logical framework was, we may guess, supplied mainly by Bolingbroke. Bathurst told Warton that Bolingbroke had given Pope the essay in prose, and that Pope had only turned it into verse, and Mallet—a friend of both—is said to have seen the very manuscript from which Pope worked. Johnson, on hearing this from Boswell, remarked that it must be an overstatement. Pope might have had from Bolingbroke the "philosophical stamina" of the essay, but he must, at least, have contributed the "poetical ima-

¹ "No letter with an envelope could give him more delight," says Swift.

gery," and have had more independent power than the story implied. It is, indeed, impossible accurately to fix the relations of the teacher and his disciple. Pope acknowledged in the strongest possible terms his dependence upon Bolingbroke, and Bolingbroke claims with equal distinctness the position of instigator and inspirer. His more elaborate philosophical works are in the form of letters to Pope, and profess to be a redaction of the conversations which they had had together. These were not written till after the *Essay on Man*; but a series of fragments appear to represent what he actually set down for Pope's guidance. They are professedly addressed to Pope. "I write," he says (fragment 65), "to you and for you, and you would think yourself little obliged to me if I took the pains of explaining in prose what you would not think it necessary to explain in verse,"—that is, the free-will puzzle. The manuscripts seen by Mallet may probable have been a commonplace book in which Bolingbroke had set down some of these fragments, by way of instructing Pope, and preparing for his own more systematic work. No reader of the fragments can, I think, doubt as to the immediate source of Pope's inspiration. Most of the ideas expressed were the common property of many contemporary writers, but Pope accepts the particular modification presented by Bolingbroke.⁸ Pope's manipulation of these materials causes much of the *Essay on Man* to resemble (as Mr. Pattison puts it) an exquisite mosaic work. A detailed examination of his mode of transmutation would be a curious study in the technical secrets of

⁸ It would be out of place to discuss this in detail; but I may say that Pope's crude theory of the state of nature, his psychology as to reason and instinct, and self-love, and his doctrine of the scale of beings, all seem to have the specific Bolingbroke stamp.

literary execution. A specimen or two will sufficiently indicate the general character of Pope's method of constructing his essay.

The forty-third fragment of Bolingbroke is virtually a prose version of much of Pope's poetry. A few phrases will exhibit the relation :—

Through worlds unnumber'd though the God be known,
 'Tis ours to trace *Him only in our own*.
 He who through vast immensity can pierce,
 See worlds on worlds *compose one universe*,
 Observe how *system into system runs*,
 What other planets circle other suns,
 What varied being peoples every star,
 May tell why Heaven has made us what we are.
 But of this frame the bearings and the ties,
 The strong *connexions*, nice *dependencies*,
 Gradations just, has thy pervading soul
 Looked through, or can a part contain the whole?

"The universe," I quote only a few phrases from Bolingbroke, "is an immense aggregate of systems. Every one of these, *if we may judge by our own*, contains several, and every one of these again, *if we may judge by our own*, is made up of a multitude of different modes of being, animated and unanimated, thinking and unthinking . . . but all concurring in one common system. . . . Just so it is with respect to the various systems and *systems of systems that compose the universe*. As distant as they are, and as different as we may imagine them to be, they are all *tied together by relations and connexions, gradations, and dependencies*." The verbal coincidence is here as marked as the coincidence in argument. Warton refers to an eloquent passage in Shaftesbury, which contains a similar thought; but one can hardly doubt that Bolingbroke was in this case the immediate source. A

quaint passage a little farther on, in which Pope represents man as complaining because he has not "the strength of bulls or the fur of bears," may be traced with equal plausibility to Shaftesbury or to Sir Thomas Browne; but I have not noticed it in Bolingbroke.

One more passage will be sufficient. Pope asks whether we are to demand the suspension of laws of nature whenever they might produce a mischievous result? Is Etna to cease an eruption to spare a sage, or should "new motions be impressed upon sea and air" for the advantage of blameless Bethel?

When the loose mountain trembles from α . high
Shall gravitation cease, if you go by?
Or some old temple, nodding to its fall,
For Chartres' head reserve the hanging wall?

Chartres is Pope's typical villain. This is a terse version, with concrete cases, of Bolingbroke's vaguer generalities. "The laws of gravitation," he says, "must sometimes be suspended (if special Providence be admitted), and sometimes their effect must be precipitated. The tottering edifice must be kept miraculously from falling, whilst innocent men lived in it or passed under it, and the fall of it must be as miraculously determined to crush the guilty inhabitant or passenger." Here, again, we have the alternative of Wollaston, who uses a similar illustration, and in one phrase comes nearer to Pope. He speaks of "new motions being impressed upon the atmosphere." We may suppose that the two friends had been dipping into Wollaston together. Elsewhere Pope seems to have stolen for himself. In the beginning of the second epistle, Pope, in describing man as "the glory, jest, and riddle of the world," is simply versifying Pascal; and a little farther on, when he speaks of reason as the

wind and passion as the gale on life's vast ocean, he is adapting his comparison from Locke's treatise on government.

If all such cases were adduced, we should have nearly picked the argumentative part of the essay to pieces; but Bolingbroke supplies throughout the most characteristic element. The fragments cohere by external cement, not by an internal unity of thought; and Pope too often descends to the level of mere satire, or indulges in a quaint conceit or palpable sophistry. Yet it would be very unjust to ignore the high qualities which are to be found in this incongruous whole. The style is often admirable. When Pope is at his best every word tells. His precision and firmness of touch enables him to get the greatest possible meaning into a narrow compass. He uses only one epithet, but it is the right one, and never boggles and patches or, in his own phrase, "blunders round about a meaning." Warton gives, as a specimen of this power, the lines:—

But errs not nature from this gracious end
From burning suns when livid deaths descend,
When earthquakes swallow or when tempests sweep
Towns to one grave whole nations to the deep?

And Mr. Pattison reinforces the criticism by quoting Voltaire's feeble imitation:—

Quand des vents de midi les funestes haleines
De semence de mort ont inondé nos plaines,
Direz-vous que jamais le ciel en son courroux
Ne laissa la santé séjourner parmi nous?

It is true that in the effort to be compressed, Pope has here and there cut to the quick and suppressed essential parts of speech, till the lines can only be construed by our

independent knowledge of their meaning. The famous line—

Man never is but always to be blest,

is an example of defective construction, though his language is often tortured by more elliptical phrases.* This power of charging lines with great fulness of meaning enables Pope to soar for brief periods into genuine and impressive poetry. Whatever his philosophical weakness and his moral obliquity, he is often moved by genuine emotion. He has a vein of generous sympathy for human sufferings and of righteous indignation against bigots, and if he only half understands his own optimism, that "whatever is is right," the vision, rather poetical than philosophical, of a harmonious universe lifts him at times into a region loftier than that of frigid and pedantic platitude. The most popular passages were certain purple patches, not arising very spontaneously or with much relevance, but also showing something more than the practised rhetorician. The "poor Indian" in one of the most highly-polished paragraphs—

Who thinks, admitted to that equal sky,
His faithful dog shall bear him company,

intrudes rather at the expense of logic, and is a decidedly conventional person. But this passage has a certain glow of fine humanity and is touched with real pathos. A further

* Perhaps the most curious example, too long for quotation, is a passage near the end of the last epistle, in which he sums up his moral system by a series of predicates for which it is impossible to find any subject. One couplet runs—

Never elated whilst one man's depress'd
Never dejected whilst another's blest.

It is impressive, but it is quite impossible to discover by the rules of grammatical construction who is to be never elated and depressed.

passage or two may sufficiently indicate his higher qualities. In the end of the third epistle Pope is discussing the origin of government and the state of nature, and discussing them in such a way as to show conclusively that he does not in the least understand the theories in question or their application. His state of Nature is a sham reproduction of the golden age of poets, made to do duty in a scientific speculation. A flimsy hypothesis learnt from Bolingbroke is not improved when overlaid with Pope's conventional ornamentation. The imaginary history proceeds to relate the growth of superstition, which destroys the primeval innocence; but why or when does not very clearly appear; yet, though the general theory is incoherent, he catches a distinct view of one aspect of the question and expresses a tolerably trite view of the question with singular terseness. Who, he asks,—

First taught souls enslaved and realms undone,
The enormous faith of many made for one?

He replies,—

Force first made conquest and that conquest law;
Till Superstition taught the tyrant awe,
Then shared the tyranny, then lent it aid,
And gods of conquerors slaves of subjects made;
She 'mid the lightning's blaze and thunder's sound,
When rock'd the mountains and when groan'd the ground—
She taught the weak to trust, the proud to pray
To Power unseen and mightier far than they;
She from the reeling earth and bursting skies
Saw gods descend and fiends infernal rise;
There fix'd the dreadful, there the blest abodes;
Fear made her devils, and weak hope her gods;
Gods partial, changeful, passionate, unjust,
Whose attributes were rage, revenge, or lust;
Such as the souls of cowards might conceive,
And, framed like tyrants, tyrants would believe.

is the loss of power were the power of expressing a thought more clearly and pointedly than prose, such writing would take a very high place. Some popular philosophers would make a running chapter out of those sixteen lines.

The blasphe in Man brought Pope into difficulties. The rational doctrine "whatever is is right," might be understood in various senses, and in some sense it would be accepted by every theist. But, in Bolingbroke's teaching, it received a heterodox application, and in Pope's imperfect version of Bolingbroke the taint was not removed. The logical outcome of the rationalistic theory of the time was some form of pantheism, and the tendency is still more marked in a poetical statement, where it was difficult to state the refined distinctions by which the conclusion is averted. When theology is regarded as demonstrable by reason, the need of a revelation ceases to be obvious. The optimistic view which sees the proof of divine order in the vast harmony of the whole visible world, throws into the background the darker side of the universe reflected in the theological doctrines of human corruption, and the consequent need of a future judgment in separation of good from evil. I need not inquire whether any optimistic theory is really tenable; but the popular version of the creed involved the attempt to ignore the evils under which all creation groans, and produced in different minds the powerful retort of Butler's *Analogy*, and the biting sarcasm of Voltaire's *Candide*. Pope, accepting the doctrine without any perception of these difficulties, unintentionally fell into sheer pantheism. He was not yielding to the logical instinct which carries out a theory to its legitimate development; but obeying the imaginative impulse which cannot stop to listen to the usual qualifications and safe-

guards of the orthodox reasoner. The best passages in the essay are those in which he is frankly pantheistic, and is swept, like Shaftesbury, into enthusiastic assertion of the universal harmony of things.

All are but parts of one stupendous whole,
Whose body nature is, and God the soul;
That changed thro' all and yet in all the same,
Great in the earth as in the ethereal frame;
Warms in the sun, refreshes in the breeze,
Flows in the stars, and blossoms in the trees;
Lives thro' all life, extends thro' all extent,
Spreads undivided, operates unspent;
Breathes in our soul, it forms our mortal part,
As full, as perfect, in a hair as heart;
As full, as perfect, in vile man that mourns,
As the rapt seraph that adores and burns;
To him, no high, no low, no great, no small,
He fills, he bounds, connects, and equals all.

In spite of some awkward phrases (hair and heart is a vile antithesis), the passage is eloquent but can hardly be called orthodox. And it was still worse when Pope undertook to show that even evil passions and vices were part of the harmony, that "a Borgia and a Cataline" were as much a part of the divine order as a plague or an earthquake, and that self-love and lust were essential to social welfare.

Pope's own religious position is characteristic and easily definable. If it is not quite defensible on the strictest principles of plain speaking, it is also certain that we could not condemn him without condemning many of the best and most catholic spirited of men. The dogmatic system in which he had presumably been educated had softened under the influence of the cultivated thought of the day. Pope, as the member of a persecuted sect, had learnt to share that righteous hatred of bigotry which is the honourable characteristic of his best contemporaries.

He considered the persecuting spirit of his own church to be its worst fault.¹ In the early *Essay on Criticism* he offended some of his own sect by a vigorous denunciation of the doctrine which promotes persecution by limiting salvation to a particular creed. His charitable conviction that a divine element is to be found in all creeds, from that of the "poor Indian" upwards, animates the highest passages in his works. But though he sympathizes with a generous toleration, and the specific dogmas of his creed sat very loosely on his mind, he did not consider that an open secession was necessary or even honourable. He called himself a true Catholic, though rather as respectfully sympathizing with the spirit of Fénelon than as holding to any dogmatic system. The most dignified letter that he ever wrote was in answer to a suggestion from Atterbury (1717), that he might change his religion upon the death of his father. Pope replies that his worldly interests would be promoted by such a step; and, in fact, it cannot be doubted that Pope might have had a share in the good things then obtainable by successful writers, if he had qualified by taking the oaths. But he adds, that such a change would hurt his mother's feelings, and that he was more certain of his duty to promote her happiness than of any speculative tenet whatever. He was sure that he could mean as well in the religion he now professed as in any other; and that being so, he thought that a change even to an equally good religion could not be justified. A similar statement appears in a letter to Swift, in 1729. "I am of the religion of Erasmus, a Catholic. So I live, so shall I die, and hope one day to meet you, Bishop Atterbury, the younger Craggs, Dr. Garth, Dean Berkeley, and Mr. Hutchison in that

¹ Spence, p. 364.

place to which God of his infinite mercy bring us and everybody." To these Protestants he would doubtless have joined the freethinking Bolingbroke. At a later period he told Warburton, in less elevated language, that the change of his creed would bring him many enemies and do no good to any one.

Pope could feel nobly and act honourably when his morbid vanity did not expose him to some temptation; and I think that in this matter his attitude was in every way creditable. He showed, indeed, the prejudice entertained by many of the rationalist divines for the freethinkers who were a little more outspoken than himself. The deist whose creed was varnished with Christian phrases, was often bitter against the deist who rejected the varnish; and Pope put Toland and Tindal into the Dun as scandalous assailants of all religion. From his point of view it was as wicked to attack any creed as to regard any creed as exclusively true; and certainly Pope was not disposed to join any party which was hated and maligned by the mass of the respectable world. For it must be remembered that, in spite of much that has been said to the contrary, and in spite of the true tendency of much so-called orthodoxy, the profession of open dissent from Christian doctrine was then regarded with extreme disapproval. It might be a fashion, as Butler and others declare, to talk infidelity in cultivated circles, but a public promulgation of unbelief was condemned as criminal, and worthy only of the Grub-street faction. Pope, therefore, was terribly shocked when he found himself accused of heterodoxy. His poem was at once translated, and, we are told, spread rapidly in France, where Voltaire and many inferior writers were introducing the contagion of English freethinking. A solid Swiss pastor

and professor of philosophy, Jean Pierre Crousaz (1663—1750), undertook the task of refutation, and published an examination of Pope's philosophy in 1737 and 1738. A serious examination of this bundle of half-digested opinions was in itself absurd. Some years afterwards (1751) Pope came under a more powerful critic. The Berlin Academy of Sciences offered a prize for a similar essay, and Lessing published a short tract called *Pope ein Metaphysiker!* If any one cares to see a demonstration that Pope did not understand the system of Leibnitz, and that the bubble blown by a great philosopher has more apparent cohesion than that of a half-read poet, he may find a sufficient statement of the case in Lessing. But Lessing sensibly protests from the start against the intrusion of such a work into serious discussion; and that is the only ground which is worth taking in the matter.

The most remarkable result of the Essay on Man, it may be parenthetically noticed, was its effect upon Voltaire. In 1751 Voltaire wrote a poem on Natural Law, which is a comparatively feeble application of Pope's principles. It is addressed to Frederick instead of Bolingbroke, and contains a warm eulogy of Pope's philosophy. But a few years later the earthquake at Lisbon suggested certain doubts to Voltaire as to the completeness of the optimist theory; and, in some of the most impressive verses of the century, he issued an energetic protest against the platitudes applied by Pope and his followers to deaden our sense of the miseries under which the race suffers. Verbally, indeed, Voltaire still makes his bow to the optimist theory, and the two poems appeared together in 1756; but his noble outcry against the empty and complacent deductions which it covers, led to his famous controversy with Rousseau.

The history of this conflict falls beyond my subject, and I must be content with this brief reference, which proves, amongst other things, the interest created by Pope's advocacy of the most characteristic doctrines of his time on the minds of the greatest leaders of the revolutionary movement.

Meanwhile, however, Crousaz was translated into English, and Pope was terribly alarmed. His "guide, philosopher, and friend" had returned to the Continent (in 1735), disgusted with his political failure, but was again in England from June, 1738, to May, 1739. We know not what comfort he may have given to his unlucky disciple, but an unexpected champion suddenly arose. William Warburton (born 1698) was gradually pushing his way to success. He had been an attorney's clerk, and had not received a university education; but his multifarious reading was making him conspicuous, helped by great energy, and by a quality which gave some plausibility to the title bestowed on him by Mallet, "The most impudent man living." In his humble days he had been intimate with Pope's enemies, Concanen and Theobald, and had spoken scornfully of Pope, saying, amongst other things, that he "borrowed for want of genius," as Addison borrowed from modesty and Milton from pride. In 1736 he had published his first important work, the *Alliance between Church and State*, and in 1738 followed the first instalment of his principal performance, the *Divine Legation*. During the following years he was the most conspicuous theologian of the day, dreaded and hated by his opponents, whom he unsparingly bullied, and dominating a small clique of abject admirers. He is said to have condemned the *Essay on Man* when it first appeared. He called it a collection of the worst

passages of the worst authors, and declared that it taught rank atheism. The appearance of Crousaz's book suddenly induced him to make a complete change of front. He declared that Pope spoke "truth uniformly throughout," and complimented him on his strong and delicate reasoning.

It is idle to seek motives for this proceeding. Warburton loved paradoxes, and delighted in brandishing them in the most offensive terms. He enjoyed the exercise of his own ingenuity, and therefore his ponderous writings, though amusing by their audacity and width of reading, are absolutely valueless for their ostensible purpose. The exposition of Pope (the first part of which appeared in December, 1738) is one of his most tiresome performances ; nor need any human being at the present day study the painful wire-drawings and sophistries by which he tries to give logical cohesion and orthodox intention to the *Essay on Man*.

If Warburton was simply practising his dialectical skill, the result was a failure. But if he had an eye to certain lower ends, his success surpassed his expectations. Pope was in ecstasies. He fell upon Warburton's neck—or rather at his feet—and overwhelmed him with professions of gratitude. He invited him to Twickenham ; met him with compliments which astonished a bystander, and wrote to him in terms of surprising humility. "You understand me," he exclaims in his first letter, "as well as I do myself ; but you express me much better than I could express myself." For the rest of his life Pope adopted the same tone. He sheltered himself behind this burly defender, and could never praise him enough. He declared Mr. Warburton to be the greatest general critic he ever knew, and was glad to instal him in the

position of champion in ordinary. Warburton was consulted about new editions; annotated Pope's poems; stood sponsor to the last Dunciad, and was assured by his admiring friend that the comment would prolong the life of the poetry. Pope left all his copyrights to this friend, whilst his MSS. were given to Bolingbroke.

When the University of Oxford proposed to confer an honorary degree upon Pope, he declined to receive the compliment, because the proposal to confer a smaller honour upon Warburton had been at the same time thrown out by the University. In fact, Pope looked up to Warburton with a reverence almost equal to that which he felt for Bolingbroke. If such admiration for such an idol was rather humiliating, we must remember that Pope was unable to detect the charlatan in the pretentious but really vigorous writer, and we may perhaps admit that there is something pathetic in Pope's constant eagerness to be supported by some sturdier arm. We find the same tendency throughout his life. The weak and morbidly sensitive nature may be forgiven if its dependence leads to excessive veneration.

Warburton derived advantages from the connexion, the prospect of which, we may hope, was not the motive of his first advocacy. To be recognized by the most eminent man of letters of the day was to receive a kind of certificate of excellence, valuable to a man who had not the regular university hall mark. More definite results followed. Pope introduced Warburton to Allen, and to Murray, afterwards Lord Mansfield. Through Murray he was appointed preacher at Lincoln's Inn, and from Allen he derived greater benefits—the hand of his niece and heiress, and an introduction to Pitt, which gained for him the bishopric of Gloucester.

Pope's allegiance to Bolingbroke was not weakened by this new alliance. He sought to bring the two together, when Bolingbroke again visited England in 1743. The only result was an angry explosion, as, indeed, might have been foreseen; for Bolingbroke was not likely to be well-disposed to the clever parson whose dexterous sleight-of-hand had transferred Pope to the orthodox camp; nor was it natural that Warburton, the most combative and insulting of controversialists, should talk on friendly terms to one of his natural antagonists—an antagonist, moreover, who was not likely to have bishoprics in his gift. The quarrel, as we shall see, broke out fiercely over Pope's grave.

CHAPTER VIII.

EPISTLES AND SATIRES.

POPE had tried a considerable number of poetical experiments when the *Dunciad* appeared, but he had not yet discovered in what direction his talents could be most efficiently exerted. Bystanders are sometimes acuter in detecting a man's true forte than the performer himself. In 1722 Atterbury had seen Pope's lines upon Addison, and reported that no piece of his writing was ever so much sought after. "Since you now know," he added, "in what direction your strength lies, I hope you will not suffer that talent to be unemployed." Atterbury seems to have been rather fond of giving advice to Pope, and puts on a decidedly pedagogic air when writing to him. The present suggestion was more likely to fall on willing ears than another made shortly before their final separation. Atterbury then presented Pope with a Bible, and recommended him to study its pages. If Pope had taken to heart some of St. Paul's exhortations to Christian charity, he would scarcely have published his lines upon Addison, and English literature would have lost some of its most brilliant pages.

Satire of the kind represented by those lines was so obviously adapted to Pope's peculiar talent, that we rather wonder at his having taken to it seriously at a compara-

tively late period, and even then having drifted into it by accident rather than by deliberate adoption. He had aimed, as has been said, at being a philosophic and didactic poet. The *Essay on Man* formed part of a much larger plan, of which two or three fragmentary sketches are given by Spence.¹ Bolingbroke and Pope wrote to Swift in November, 1729, about a scheme then in course of execution. Bolingbroke declares that Pope is now exerting what was eminently and peculiarly his talents, above all writers, living or dead, without excepting Horace; whilst Pope explained that this was a "system of ethics in the Horatian way." The language seems to apply best to the poems afterwards called the *Ethic Epistles*, though, at this time, Pope, perhaps, had not a very clear plan in his head, and was working at different parts simultaneously. The *Essay on Man*, his most distinct scheme, was to form the opening book of his poem. Three others were to treat of knowledge and its limits, of government—ecclesiastical and civil—and of morality. The last book itself involved an elaborate plan. There were to be three epistles about each cardinal virtue—one, for example, upon avarice; another on the contrary extreme of prodigality; and a third, upon the judicious mean of a moderate use of riches. Pope told Spence that he had dropped the plan chiefly because his third book would have provoked every Church on the face of the earth, and he did not care for always being in boiling water. The scheme, however, was far too wide and too systematic for Pope's powers. His spasmodic energy enabled him only to fill up corners of the canvas, and from what he did, it is sufficiently evident that his classification would have been incoherent and his philosophy

¹ Spence, pp. 16, 48, 137, 315.

unequal to the task. Part of his work was used for the fourth book of the *Dunciad*, and the remainder corresponds to what are now called the *Ethic Epistles*. These, as they now stand, include five poems. One of these has no real connexion with the others. It is a poem addressed to Addison, "occasioned by his dialogue on medals," written (according to Pope) in 1715, and first published in Tuckell's edition of Addison's works in 1721. The epistle to Burlington on taste was afterwards called the *Use of Riches*, and appended to another with the same title, thus filling a place in the ethical scheme, though devoted to a very subsidiary branch of the subject. It appeared in 1731. The epistle "of the use of riches" appeared in 1732, that of the knowledge and characters of men in 1733, and that of the characters of women in 1735. The last three are all that would seem to belong to the wider treatise contemplated; but Pope composed so much in fragments that it is difficult to say what bits he might have originally intended for any given purpose.

Another distraction seems to have done more than his fear of boiling water to arrest the progress of the elaborate plan. Bolingbroke coming one day into his room, took up a Horace, and observed that the first satire of the second book would suit Pope's style. Pope translated it in a morning or two, and sent it to press almost immediately (1733). The poem had a brilliant success. It contained, amongst other things, the couplet which provoked his war with Lady Mary and Lord Hervey. This, again, led to his putting together the epistle to Arbuthnot, which includes the bitter attack upon Hervey, as part of a general *apologia pro vita sua*. It was afterwards called the *Prologue to the Satires*. Of his other

imitations of Horace, one appeared in 1734 (the second satire of the second book), and four more (the first and sixth epistles of the first book and the first and second of the second book) in 1738. Finally, in 1737, he published two dialogues, first called "1738" and afterwards "The Epilogue to the Satires," which are in the same vein as the epistle to Arbuthnot. These epistles and imitations of Horace, with the so-called prologue and epilogue, took up the greatest part of Pope's energy during the years in which his intellect was at its best, and show his finest technical qualities. The Essay on Man was on hand during the early part of this period, the epistles and satires representing a ramification from the same inquiry. But the essay shows the weak side of Pope, whilst his most remarkable qualities are best represented by these subsidiary writings. The reason will be sufficiently apparent after a brief examination, which will also give occasion for saying what still remains to be said in regard to Pope as a literary artist.

The weakness already conspicuous in the Essay on Man mars the effect of the Ethic Epistles. His work tends to be rather an aggregation than an organic whole. He was (if I may borrow a phrase from the philologists) an agglutinative writer, and composed by sticking together independent fragments. His mode of composition was natural to a mind incapable of sustained and continuous thought. In the epistles, he professes to be working on a plan. The first expounds his favourite theory (also treated in the essay) of a "ruling passion." Each man has such a passion, if only you can find it, which explains the apparent inconsistency of his conduct. This theory, which has exposed him to a charge of fatalism (especially from people who did not very well know what fatalism

means), is sufficiently striking for his purpose; but it rather turns up at intervals than really binds the epistle into a whole. But the arrangement of his portrait gallery is really unsystematic; the affectation of a system is rather in the way. The most striking characters in the essay on women were inserted (whenever composed) some time after its first appearance, and the construction is too loose to make any interruption of the argument perceptible. The poems contain some of Pope's most brilliant bits, but we can scarcely remember them as a whole. The characters of Wharton and Vilhera, of Atossa, of the Man of Ross, and Sir Balaam, stand out as brilliant passages which would do almost as well in any other setting. In the imitations of Horace he is, of course, guided by lines already laid down for him; and he has shown admirable skill in translating the substance as well as the words of his author by the nearest equivalents. This peculiar mode of imitation had been tried by other writers, but in Pope's hands it succeeded beyond all precedent. There is so much congeniality between Horace and Pope, and the social orders of which they were the spokesmen, that he can represent his original without giving us any sense of constraint. Yet even here he sometimes obscures the thread of connexion, and we feel more or less clearly that the order of thought is not that which would have spontaneously arisen in his own mind. So, for example, in the imitation of Horace's first epistle of the first book, the references to the Stoical and Epicurean morals imply a connexion of ideas to which nothing corresponds in Pope's reproduction. Horace is describing a genuine experience, while Pope is only putting together a string of commonplaces. The most interesting part of these imitations are those in which Pope takes advantage of the

suggestions in Horace to be thoroughly autobiographical. He manages to run his own experience and feelings into the moulds provided for him by his predecessor. One of the happiest passages is that in which he turns the serious panegyric on Augustus into a bitter irony against the other Augustus, whose name was George, and who, according to Lord Hervey, was so contrasted with his prototype, that whereas personal courage was the one weak point of the emperor, it was the one strong point of the English king. As soon as Pope has a chance of expressing his personal antipathies or (to do him bare justice) his personal attachments, his lines begin to glow. When he is trying to preach, to be ethical and philosophical, he is apt to fall into mouthing and to lose his place; but when he can forget his stilts, or point his morality by some concrete and personal instance, every word is alive. And it is this which makes the epilogues, and more especially the prologue to the satires, his most impressive performances. The unity which is very ill-supplied by some ostensible philosophical thesis, or even by the leading strings of Horace, is given by his own intense interest in himself. The best way of learning to enjoy Pope is to get by heart the epistle to Arbuthnot. That epistle is, as I have said, his *Apologia*. In its some 400 lines, he has managed to compress more of his feelings and thoughts than would fill an ordinary autobiography. It is true that the epistle requires a commentator. It wants some familiarity with the events of Pope's life, and many lines convey only a part of their meaning unless we are familiar not only with the events, but with the characters of the persons mentioned. Passages over which we pass carelessly at the first reading then come out with wonderful freshness, and single phrases throw a

sudden light upon hidden depths of feeling. It is also true, unluckily, that parts of it must be read by the rule of contraries. They tell us not what Pope really was, but what he wished others to think him, and what he probably endeavoured to persuade himself that he was. How far he succeeded in imposing upon himself is indeed a very curious question which can never be fully answered. There is the strangest mixture of honesty and hypocrisy. Let me, he says, live my own and die so too—

(To live and die is all I have to do)
Maintain a poet's dignity and ease,
And see what friends and read what books I please!

Well, he was independent in his fashion, and we can at least believe that he so far believed in himself. But when he goes on to say that he "can sleep without a poem in his head,

Nor know if Dennis be alive or dead,"

we remember his calling up the maid four times a night in the dreadful winter of 1740 to save a thought, and the features writhing in anguish as he read a hostile pamphlet. Presently he informs us that "he thinks a lie in prose or verse the same"—only too much the same! and that "if he pleased, he pleased by manly ways." Alas! for the manliness. And yet again when he speaks of his parents,

Unspotted names and venerable long
If there be force in virtue or in song,

can we doubt that he is speaking from the heart? We should perhaps like to forget that the really exquisite and touching lines in which he speaks of his mother had been so carefully elaborated.

Me let the tender office long engage
To rock the cradle of declining age,

With lenient acts extend a mother's breath,
Make languor smile and smooth the bed of death,
Explore the thought, explain the asking eye,
And keep awhile one parent from the sky!

If there are more tender and exquisitely expressed lines in the language, I know not where to find them; and yet again I should be glad not to be reminded by a cruel commentator that poor Mrs. Pope had been dead for two years when they were published, and that even this touching effusion has therefore a taint of dramatic affectation.

To me, I confess, it seems most probable, though at first sight incredible, that these utterances were thoroughly sincere for the moment. I fancy that under Pope's elaborate masks of hypocrisy and mystification there was a heart always abnormally sensitive. Unfortunately it was as capable of bitter resentment as of warm affection, and was always liable to be misled by the suggestions of his strangely irritable vanity. And this seems to me to give the true key to Pope's poetical as well as to his personal characteristics.

To explain either, we must remember that he was a man of impulses; at one instant a mere incarnate thrill of gratitude or generosity, and in the next of spite or jealousy. A spasm of wounded vanity would make him for the time as mean and selfish as other men are made by a frenzy of bodily fear. He would instinctively snatch at a lie even when a moment's reflection would have shown that the plain truth would be more convenient, and therefore he had to accumulate lie upon lie, each intended to patch up some previous blunder. Though nominally the poet of reason, he was the very antithesis of the man who is reasonable in the highest sense: who is truthful in word

and deed because his conduct is regulated by harmonious and invariable principles. Pope was governed by the instantaneous feeling. His emotion came in sudden jets and gushes, instead of a continuous stream. The same peculiarity deprives his poetry of continuous harmony or profound unity of conception. His lively sense of form and proportion enables him indeed to fill up a simple framework (generally of borrowed design) with an eye to general effect, as in the Rape of the Lock or the first Dunciad. But even there his flight is short, and when a poem should be governed by the evolution of some profound principle or complex mood of sentiment, he becomes incoherent and perplexed. But on the other hand he can perceive admirably all that can be seen at a glance from a single point of view. Though he could not be continuous, he could return again and again to the same point; he could polish, correct, eliminate superfluities, and compress his meaning more and more closely, till he has constructed short passages of imperishable excellence. This microscopic attention to fragments sometimes injures the connexion, and often involves a mutilation of construction. He corrects and prunes too closely. He could, he says, in reference to the Essay on Man, put things more briefly in verse than in prose; one reason being that he could take liberties of this kind not permitted in prose writing. But the injury is compensated by the singular terseness and vivacity of his best style. Scarcely any one, as is often remarked, has left so large a proportion of quotable phrases,¹ and, indeed, to the present he survives

¹ To take an obviously uncertain test, I find that in Bartlett's dictionary of familiar quotations, Shakspeare fills 70 pages, Milton, 23; Pope, 18; Wordsworth, 16; and Byron, 15. The rest are nowhere.

chiefly by the current coinage of that kind which bears his image and superscription.

This familiar remark may help us to solve the old problem whether Pope was, or rather in what sense he was, a poet. Much of his work may be fairly described as rhymed prose, differing from prose not in substance or tone of feeling, but only in the form of expression. Every poet has an invisible audience, as an orator has a visible one, who deserve a great part of the merit of his works. Some men may write for the religious or philosophic recluse, and therefore utter the emotions which come to ordinary mortals in the rare moments when the music of the spheres, generally drowned by the din of the commonplace world, becomes audible to their dull senses. Pope, on the other hand, writes for the wits who never listen to such strains, and moreover writes for their ordinary moods. He aims at giving us the refined and doubly distilled essence of the conversation of the statesmen and courtiers of his time. The standard of good writing always implicitly present to his mind is the fitness of his poetry to pass muster when shown by Gay to his duchess, or read after dinner to a party composed of Swift, Bolingbroke, and Congreve. That imaginary audience is always looking over his shoulder, applauding a good hit, chuckling over allusions to the last bit of scandal, and ridiculing any extravagance tending to romance or sentimentalism.

The limitations imposed by such a condition are obvious. As men of taste, Pope's friends would make their bow to the recognized authorities. They would praise *Paradise Lost*, but a new Milton would be as much out of place with them as the real Milton at the court of Charles II. They would really prefer to have his verses tagged by Dryden, or the Samson polished by Pope. They would have

ridiculed Wordsworth's mysticism or Shelley's idealism, as they laughed at the religious "enthusiasm" of Law or Wesley, or the metaphysical subtleties of Berkeley and Hume. They preferred the philosophy of the *Essay on Man*, which might be appropriated by a common-sense preacher, or the rhetoric of *Eloisa and Abelard*, bits of which might be used to excellent effect (as indeed Pope himself used the peroration) by a fine gentleman addressing his gallantry to a contemporary Sappho. It is only too easy to expose their shallowness, and therefore to overlook what was genuine in their feelings. After all, Pope's eminent friends were no mere tailor's blocks for the display of laced coats. Swift and Bolingbroke were not enthusiasts nor philosophers, but certainly they were no fools. They liked in the first place thorough pooh. They could appreciate a perfectly turned phrase, an epigram which concentrated into a couplet a volume of quick observations, a smart saying from Rochefoucauld or La Bruyère, which gave an edge to worldly wisdom; a really brilliant utterance of one of those maxims, half true and not over profound, but still presenting one aspect of life as they saw it, which have since grown rather threadbare. This sort of moralizing, which is the staple of Pope's epistles upon the ruling passion or upon avarice, strikes us now as unpleasantly obvious. We have got beyond it and want some more refined analysis and more complex psychology. Take, for example, Pope's epistle to Bathurst, which was in hand for two years, and is just 400 lines in length. The simplicity of the remarks is almost comic. Nobody wants to be told now that bribery is facilitated by modern system of credit.

Blest paper-credit ! last and best supply
That lends corruption lighter wings to fly !

This triteness blinds us to the singular felicity with which the observations have been versified, a felicity which makes many of the phrases still proverbial. The mark is so plain that we do scant justice to the accuracy and precision with which it is hit. Yet when we notice how every epithet tells, and how perfectly the writer does what he tries to do, we may understand why Pope extorted contemporary admiration. We may, for example, read once more the familiar passage about Buckingham. The picture, such as it is, could not be drawn more strikingly with fewer lines.

In the worst inn's worst room, with mat half-hung,
The floors of plaister and the walls of dung,
On once a flock-bed but repair'd with straw,
With tape-ty'd curtains never meant to draw,
The George and Garter dangling from that bed,
Where tawdry yellow strove with dirty red,
Great Villiers lies ! alas, how changed from him,
That life of pleasure and that soul of whim !
Gallant and gay in Cliveden's proud alcove,
The bower of wanton Shrewsbury and love ;
As great as gay, at council in a ring
Of mimic'd statesmen, and their merry king.
No wit to flatter left of all his store !
No fool to laugh at, which he valued more.
Thus, victor of his health, of fortune, friends,
And fame, the lord of useless thousands ends.

It is as graphic as a page of Dickens, and has the advantage of being less grotesque, if the sentiment is equally obvious. When Pope has made his hit, he does not blur the effect by trying to repeat it.

In these epistles, it must be owned that the sentiment is not only obvious but prosaic. The moral maxims are delivered like advice offered by one sensible man to another, not with the impassioned fervour of a prophet.

Nor can Pope often rise to that level at which alone satire is transmuted into the higher class of poetry. To accomplish that feat, if, indeed, it be possible, the poet must not simply ridicule the fantastic tricks of poor mortals, but show how they appear to the angels who weep over them. The petty figures must be projected against a background of the infinite, and we must feel the relations of our tiny eddies of life to the oceanic currents of human history. Pope can never rise above the crowd. He is looking at his equals, not contemplating them from the height which reveals their insignificance. The element, which may fairly be called poetical, is derived from an inferior source; but sometimes has passion enough in it to lift him above mere prose.

In one of his most animated passages, Pope relates his desire to—

Brand the bold front of shameless guilty men
Dash the proud gamester in his gilded car,
Bare the mean heart that lurks beneath a star.

For the moment he takes himself seriously; and, indeed, he seems to have persuaded both himself and his friends that he was really a great defender of virtue. Arbathnot begged him, almost with his dying breath, to continue his "noble disdain and abhorrence of vice," and, with a due regard to his own safety, to try rather to reform than chastise; and Pope accepts the office ostentatiously. His provocation is "the strong antipathy of good to bad," and he exclaims,

Yes! I am proud—I must be proud to see
Men not afraid of God, afraid of me
Safe from the bar, the pulpit, and the throne,
Yet touch'd and shamed by ridicule alone

If the sentiment provokes a slight incredulity, it is yet

worth while to understand its real meaning; and the explanation is not very far to seek.

Pope's best writing, I have said, is the essence of conversation. It has the quick movement, the boldness and brilliance, which we suppose to be the attributes of the best talk. Of course the apparent facility is due to conscientious labour. In the Prologue and Epilogue and the best parts of the imitations of Horace, he shows such consummate mastery of his peculiar style, that we forget the monotonous metre. The opening passage, for example, of the Prologue is written apparently with the perfect freedom of real dialogue; in fact, it is of course far more pointed and compressed than any dialogue could ever be. The dramatic vivacity with which the whole scene is given, shows that he could use metre as the most skilful performer could command a musical instrument. Pope, indeed, shows in the *Essay on Criticism*, that his view about the uniformity of sound and sense were crude enough; they are analogous to the tricks by which a musician might decently imitate the cries of animals or the murmurs of a crowd; and his art excludes any attempt at rivalling the melody of the great poets who aim at producing a harmony quite independent of the direct meaning of their words. I am only speaking of the felicity with which he can move in metre, without the slightest appearance of restraint, so as to give a kind of idealized representation of the tone of animated verbal intercourse. Whatever comes within this province he can produce with admirable fidelity. Now in such talks as we imagine with Swift and Bolingbroke, we may be quite sure that there would be some very forcible denunciation of corruption—corruption being of course regarded as due to the diabolical agency of Walpole. During his later years,

Pope became a friend of all the Opposition clique, which was undermining the power of the great minister. In his last letters to Swift, Pope speaks of the new circle of promising patriots who were rising round him, and from whom he entertained hopes of the regeneration of this corrupt country. Sentiments of this kind were the staple talk of the circles in which he moved, and all the young men of promise believed, or persuaded themselves to fancy, that a political millennium would follow the downfall of Walpole. Pope, susceptible as always to the influences of his social surroundings, took in all this, and delighted in figuring himself as the prophet of the new era and the denouncer of wickedness in high places. He sees "old England's genius" dragged in the dust, hears the black trumpet of vice proclaiming that "not to be corrupted is the shame," and declares that he will draw the last pen for freedom, and use his "sacred weapon" in truth's defence.

To imagine Pope at his best, we must place ourselves in Twickenham on some fine day, when the long disease has relaxed its grasp for a moment; when he has taken a turn through his garden, and comforted his poor frame with potted lampreys and a glass or two from his frugal pint. Suppose two or three friends to be sitting with him, the stately Bolingbroke or the mercurial Bathurst, with one of the patriotic hopes of mankind, Marchmont or Lyttelton, to stimulate his ardour, and the amiable Spence, or Mrs. Patty Blount to listen reverentially to his morality. Let the conversation kindle into vivacity, and host and guests fall into a friendly rivalry, whetting each other's wits by lively repartee, and airing the little fragments of worldly wisdom which pass muster for profound observation at Court; for a time they talk platitudes, though striking

out now and then brilliant flashes, as from the collision of polished rapiers ; they diverge, perhaps, into literature, and Pope shines in discussing the secrets of the art to which his whole life has been devoted with untiring fidelity. Suddenly the mention of some noted name provokes a startling outburst of personal invective from Pope ; his friends judiciously divert the current of wrath into a new channel, and he becomes for the moment a generous patriot declaiming against the growth of luxury ; the mention of some sympathizing friend brings out a compliment, so exquisitely turned, as to be a permanent title of honour, conferred by genius instead of power ; or the thought of his parents makes his voice tremble, and his eyes shine with pathetic softness ; and you forgive the occasional affectation which you can never quite forget, or even the occasional grossness or harshness of sentiment which contrasts so strongly with the superficial polish. A genuine report of even the best conversation would be intolerably prosy and unimaginative. But imagine the very pith and essence of such talk brought to a focus, concentrated into the smallest possible space with the infinite dexterity of a thoroughly trained hand, and you have the kind of writing in which Pope is unrivalled ; polished prose with occasional gleams of genuine poetry—the epistle to Arbuthnot and the epilogue to the Satires.

One point remains to be briefly noticed. The virtue on which Pope prided himself was correctness ; and I have interpreted this to mean the quality which is gained by incessant labour, guided by quick feeling, and always under the strict supervision of common sense. The next literary revolution led to a depreciation of this quality. Warton (like Macaulay long afterwards) argued that in a higher sense, the Elizabethan poets were really as correct

as Pope. Their poetry embodied a higher and more complex law, though it neglected the narrow cut-and-dried precepts recognized in the Queen Anne period. The new school came to express too indiscriminating a contempt for the whole theory and practice of Pope and his followers. Pope, said Cowper, and a thousand critics have echoed his words, -

Made poetry a mere mechanic art
And every warbler had his tune by heart.

Without discussing the wider question, I may here briefly remark that this judgment, taken absolutely, gives a very false impression of Pope's artistic quality. Pope is undoubtedly monotonous. Except in one or two lyrics, such as the Ode on St. Cecilia's Day, which must be reckoned amongst his utter failures, he invariably employed the same metre. The discontinuity of his style, and the strict rules which he adopted, tend to disintegrate his poems. They are a series of brilliant passages, often of brilliant couplets, stuck together in a conglomerate; and as the inferior connecting matter decays, the interstices open and allow the whole to fall into ruin. To read a series of such couplets, each complete in itself, and each so constructed as to allow of a very small variety of form, is naturally to receive an impression of monotony. Pope's antitheses fall into a few common forms, which are repeated over and over again, and seem copy to each other. And, in a sense, such work can be very easily imitated. A very inferior artist can obtain most of his efforts, and all the external qualities of his style. One ten-syllabled rhyming couplet, with the whole sense strictly confined within its limits, and allowing only of such variety as follows from changing the pauses, is undoubtedly very

much like another. And accordingly one may read in any collection of British poets innumerable pages of verification which—if you do not look too close—are exactly like Pope. All poets who have any marked style are more or less imitable; in the present age of revivals, a clever versifier is capable of adopting the manners of his leading contemporaries, or that of any poet from Spenser to Shelley or Keats. The quantity of work scarcely distinguishable from that of the worst passages in Mr. Tennyson, Mr. Browning, and Mr. Swinburne, seems to be limited only by the supply of stationery at the disposal of practised performers. That which makes the imitations of Pope prominent is partly the extent of his sovereignty; the vast number of writers who confined themselves exclusively to his style; and partly the fact that what is easily imitable in him is so conspicuous an element of the whole. The rigid framework which he adopted is easily definable with mathematical precision. The difference between the best work of Pope and the ordinary work of his followers is confined within narrow limits, and not easily perceived at a glance. The difference between blank verse in the hands of its few masters and in the hands of a third-rate imitator strikes the ear in every line. Far more is left to the individual idiosyncrasy. But it does not at all follow, and in fact it is quite untrue that the distinction which turns on an apparently insignificant element is therefore unimportant. The value of all good work ultimately depends on touches so fine as to elude the sight. And the proof is that although Pope was so constantly imitated, no later and contemporary writer succeeded in approaching his excellence. Young, of the *Night Thoughts*, was an extraordinarily clever writer and talker, even if he did not (as one of his hearers asserts)

eclipse Voltaire by the brilliance of his conversation, Young's satires show abundance of wit, and one may not be able to say at a glance in what they are inferior to Pope. Yet they have hopelessly perished, whilst Pope's work remains classical. Of all the crowd of eighteenth-century writers in Pope's manner, only two made an approach to him worth notice. Johnson's *Vanity of Human Wishes* surpasses Pope in general sense of power, and Goldsmith's two poems in the same style have phrases of a higher order than Pope's. But even these poems have not made so deep a mark. In the last generation, Gifford's *Baviad and Moeviad*, and Byron's *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, were clever reproductions of the manner; but Gifford is already unreadable, and Byron is pale beside his original; and, therefore, making full allowance for Pope's monotony, and the tiresome prominence of certain mechanical effects, we must, I think, admit that he has after all succeeded in doing with unsurpassable excellence what innumerable rivals have failed to do as well. The explanation is—if the phrase explains anything—that he was a man of genius, or that he brought to a task, not of the highest class, a keenness of sensibility, a conscientious desire to do his very best, and a capacity for taking pains with his work, which enabled him to be as indisputably the first in his own peculiar line, as our greatest men have been in far more lofty undertakings.

The man who could not publish *Pastorals* without getting into quarrels, was hardly likely to become a professed satirist without giving offence. Besides numerous stabs administered to old enemies, Pope opened some fresh animosities by passages in these poems. Some pointed ridicule was aimed at Montagu, Earl of Halifax,

in the Prologue ; for there can be no doubt that Halifax³ was pointed out in the character of Bufo. Pope told a story in later days of an introduction to Halifax, the great patron of the early years of the century, who wished to hear him read his Homer. After the reading Halifax suggested that one passage should be improved. Pope retired rather puzzled by his vague remarks, but, by Garth's advice, returned some time afterwards, and read the same passage without alteration. "Ay, now Mr. Pope," said Halifax, "they are perfectly right ; nothing can be better !" This little incident perhaps suggested to Pope that Halifax was a humbug, and there seems, as already noticed, to have been some difficulty about the desired dedication of the *Iliad*. Though Halifax had been dead for twenty years when the Prologue appeared, Pope may have been in the right in satirizing the pompous would-be patron, from whom he had received nothing, and whose pretences he had seen through. But the bitterness of the attack is disagreeable when we add that Pope paid Halifax high compliments in the preface to the *Iliad*, and boasted of his friendship, shortly after the satire, in the Epilogue to the *Satires*. A more disagreeable affair at the moment was the description, in the Epistle on Taste, of Canons, the splendid seat of the Duke of Chandos. Chandos, being still alive, resented the attack, and Pope had not the courage to avow his meaning, which might in that case have been justifiable. He declared to Burlington (to whom the epistle was addressed), and to Chandos, that he had not intended Canons, and tried to make peace by saying in another epistle that "gracious Chandos is beloved at sight." This exculpation, says John-

³ Roscoe's attempt at a denial was conclusively answered by Bowles in one of his pamphlets.

son, was received by the duke "with great magnanimity, as by a man who accepted his excuse, without believing his professions." Nobody, in fact, believed, and even Warburton let out the secret by a comic oversight. Pope had prophesied in his poem that another age would see the destruction of "Timon's Villa," when laughing Ceres would reassume the land. Had he lived three years longer, said Warburton in a note, Pope would have seen his prophecy fulfilled, namely, by the destruction of Canons. The note was corrected, but the admission that Canons belonged to Timon had been made.

To such accusations Pope had a general answer. He described the type, not the individual. The fault was with the public, who chose to fit the cap. His friend remonstrates in the Epilogue against his personal satire. "Come on, then, Satire, general, unconfined," exclaims the poet,

Spread thy broad wing and scouse on all the kind

* * * * *

Ye reverend atheists. (Friend) Scandal! name them! who?
(Pope) Why, that's the thing you bade me not to do.

Who starved a sister, who forswore a debt,

I never named; the town's inquiring yet.

The pois'ning dame— (F.) You mean— (P.) I don't.

(F.) You do.

(P.) See, now, I keep the secret, and not you!

It must in fact be admitted that from the purely artistic point of view, Pope is right. Prosaic commentators are always asking, Who is meant by a poet, as though a poem were a legal document. It may be interesting, for various purposes, to know who was in the writer's mind, or what fact suggested the general picture. But we have no right to look outside the poem itself, or to infer anything not within the four corners of the state-

ment. It matters not for such purposes whether there was, or was not, any real person corresponding to Sir Balaam, to whom his wife said, when he was enriched by Cornish wreckers, "live like yourself,"

When lo ! two puddings smoked upon the board,

in place of the previous one on Sabbath days. Nor does it even matter whether Atticus meant Addison, or Sappho Lady Mary. The satire is equally good, whether its objects are mere names or realities.

But the moral question is quite distinct. In that case we must ask whether Pope used words calculated or intended to fix an imputation upon particular people. Whether he did it in prose or verse, the offence was the same. In many cases he gives real names, and in many others gives unmistakable indications, which must have fixed his satire to particular people. If he had written Addison for Atticus (as he did at first), or Lady Mary for Sappho, or Halifax for Bufo, the insinuation could not have been clearer. His attempt to evade his responsibility was a mere equivocation—a device which he seems to have preferred to direct lying. The character of Bufo might be equally suitable to others ; but no reasonable man could doubt that every one would fix it upon Halifax. In some cases—possibly in that of Chandos—he may have thought that his language was too general to apply, and occasionally it seems that he sometimes tried to evade consequences by adding some inconsistent characteristic to his portraits.

I say this, because I am here forced to notice the worst of all the imputations upon Pope's character. The epistle on the characters of women now includes the famous lines on Atossa, which did not appear till after Pope's

death.* They were (in 1746) at once applied to the famous Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough; and a story immediately became current that the duchess had paid Pope 1000*l.* to suppress them, but that he preserved them, with a view to their ultimate publication. This story was repeated by Warton and by Walpole; it has been accepted by Mr. Carruthers, who suggests, by way of palliation, that Pope was desirous at the time of providing for Martha Blount, and probably took the sum in order to buy an annuity for her. Now, if the story were proved, it must be admitted that it would reveal a baseness in Pope which would be worthy only of the lowest and most venal literary marauders. No more disgraceful imputation could have been made upon Curll, or Curll's miserable dependents. A man who could so prostitute his talents must have been utterly vile. Pope has sins enough to answer for; but his other meanesses were either sacrifices to his morbid vanity, or (like his offence against Swift, or his lies to Aaron Hill and Chandos) collateral results of spasmodic attempts to escape from humiliation. In money-matters he seems to have been generally independent. He refused gifts from his rich friends, and confuted the rather similar calumny that he had received 500*l.* from the Duke of Chandos. If the account rested upon mere contemporary scandal, we might reject it on the ground of its inconsistency with his known character, and its likeness to other fabrications of his enemies. There is, however, further evidence. It is such evidence as would, at most, justify a verdict of "not proven" in a court of justice. But the critic is not bound by legal rules, and has to say what is the most probable solution, without fear or favour.

I cannot here go into the minute details. This much,

* On this subject Mr. Dilke's *Papers of a Critic*.

however, may be taken as established. Pope was printing a new edition of his works at the time of his death. He had just distributed to his friends some copies of the *Ethic Epistles*, and in those copies the *Atossa* appeared. Bolingbroke, to whom Pope had left his unpublished papers, discovered it, and immediately identified it with the duchess, who (it must be noticed) was still alive. He wrote to Marchmont, one of Pope's executors, that there could be "no excuse for Pope's design of publishing it after the favour you and I know." This is further explained by a note added in pencil by Marchmont's executor, "1000*l.*;" and the son of this executor, who published the Marchmont papers, says that this was the favour received by Pope from the duchess. This, however, is far from proving a direct bribe. It is, in fact, hardly conceivable that the duchess and Pope should have made such a bargain in direct black and white, and equally inconceivable that two men like Bolingbroke and Marchmont should have been privy to such a transaction, and spoken of it in such terms. Bolingbroke thinks that the favour received laid Pope under an obligation, but evidently does not think that it implied a contract. Mr. Dilke has further pointed out that there are many touches in the character which distinctly apply to the Duchess of Buckingham, with whom Pope had certainly quarrelled, and which will not apply to the Duchess of Marlborough, who had undoubtedly made friends with him during the last years of his life. Walpole again tells a story, partly confirmed by Warton, that Pope had shown the character to each duchess (Warton says only to Marlborough), saying that it was meant for the other. The Duchess of Buckingham, he says, believed him; the other had more sense and paid him 1000*l.* to suppress it.

WALTON IS IN THE MOST COMPLETELY RIGHT. THE THEATRE OF THE
 INFERNO IS THE ONLY ONE THAT WAS NOT CENSURED.

THE MORE PROFOUNDLY THE THEATRE OF THE INFERNO IS
 POPE'S LITTLE WAS A PERSON WHOSE WILL TO ENDURE LAST.
 THOUGH IT WOULD BE INDEEDLY REPEATED IN THE MOST FAMOUS
 IN SOME OF THE MOST OF THE POPE'S MOST FAMOUS
 POSSIBLY THE MOST IN SOME OF THE MOST FAMOUS
 DUCHESSE OF MONTMONT, WHICH WAS FELT BY HIS FRIENDS TO
 MAKE HIS WORK EVEN MORE INJUSTIFIABLE. WE CAN SCARCELY
 BELIEVE THAT THERE SHOULD HAVE BEEN A DIRECT CONTACT OF THE
 KIND DESCRIBED. IF POPE HAD BEEN A PERSON OF JULY SENSITIVE
 CONSCIENCE HE WOULD HAVE SUPPRESSED HIS WORK.
 BUT TO SUPPRESS ANYTHING THAT HE HAD WRITTEN, AND ESPE-
 CIALLY A PASSAGE SO CAREFULLY LABOURED, WAS ALWAYS AGONY
 TO HIM. HE PREFERRED, AS WE MAY PERHAPS CONJECTURE, TO
 SETTLE IN HIS OWN MIND THAT IT WOULD FIT THE DUCHESSE OF
 BUCKINGHAM, AND POSSIBLY INTRODUCED SOME OF THE TOUCHES
 TO WHICH MR. DILKE REFERS. HE THOUGHT IT SUFFICIENTLY
 DISGUISED TO BE WILLING TO PUBLISH IT WHILST THE PERSON
 WITH WHOM IT WAS NATURALLY IDENTIFIED WAS STILL ALIVE.
 HAD SHE COMPLAINED, HE WOULD HAVE RELIED UPON THOSE
 TOUCHES, AND HAVE EQUIVOCATED AS HE EQUIVOCATED TO HILL
 AND CHANDOS. HE ALWAYS SEEMS TO HAVE FANCIED THAT HE
 COULD CONCEAL HIMSELF BY VERY THIN DISGUISES. BUT HE
 OUGHT TO HAVE KNOWN, AND PERHAPS DID KNOW, THAT IT
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 FERRED AN OBLIGATION. FROM THAT GUILT NO HYPOTHESIS CAN
 RELIEVE HIM; BUT IT IS CERTAINLY NOT PROVED, AND SEEMS, ON
 THE WHOLE, IMPROBABLE THAT HE WAS SO BASE AS THE CON-
 CESSIONS OF HIS BIOGRAPHERS WOULD INDICATE.

CHAPTER IX.

THE END.

THE last satires were published in 1738. Six years of life still remained to Pope ; his intellectual powers were still vigorous, and his pleasure in their exercise had not ceased. The only fruit, however, of his labours during this period was the fourth book of the *Dunciad*. He spent much time upon bringing out new editions of his works, and upon the various intrigues connected with the Swift correspondence. But his health was beginning to fail. The ricketty framework was giving way, and failing to answer the demands of the fretful and excitable brain. In the spring of 1744 the poet was visibly breaking up ; he suffered from dropsical asthma, and seems to have made matters worse by putting himself in the hands of a notorious quack—a Dr. Thomson. The end was evidently near as he completed his fifty-sixth year. Friends, old and new, were often in attendance. Above all, Bolingbroke, the venerated friend of thirty years' standing ; Patty Blount, the woman whom he loved best ; and the excellent Spence, who preserved some of the last words of the dying man. The scene, as he saw it, was pathetic ; perhaps it is not less pathetic to us, for whom it has another side as of grim tragic humour.

Three weeks before his death Pope was sending off

copies of the *Ethic Epistles*—apparently with the *Atossa* lines to his friends. “Here I am, like Socrates,” he said, “dispensing my morality amongst my friends just as I am dying.” Spence watched him as anxiously as his disciples watched Socrates. He was still sensible to kindness. Whenever Miss Blount came in, the failing spirits rallied for a moment. He was always saying something kindly of his friends, “as if his humanity had outlasted his understanding.” Bolingbroke, when Spence made the remark, said that he had never known a man with so tender a heart for his own friends or for mankind. “I have known him,” he added, “these thirty years, and value myself more for that man’s love than—” and his voice was lost in tears. At moments Pope could still be playful. “Here I am, dying of a hundred good symptoms,” he replied to some flattering report, but his mind was beginning to wander. He complained of seeing things as through a curtain. “What’s that?” he said, pointing to the air, and then, with a smile of great pleasure, added softly, “’twas a vision.” His religious sentiments still edified his hearers. “I am so certain,” he said, “of the soul’s being immortal, that I seem to feel it within me, as it were by intuition;” and early one morning he rose from bed and tried to begin an essay upon immortality, apparently in a state of semi-delirium. On his last day he sacrificed, as Chesterfield rather cynically observes, his cock to *Æsculapius*. Hooke, a zealous Catholic friend, asked him whether he would not send for a priest. “I do not suppose that it is essential,” said Pope, “but it will look right, and I heartily thank you for putting me in mind of it.” A priest was brought, and Pope received the last sacraments with great fervour and resignation. Next day, on May 30th, 1714, he died so

painful associations: and Pope, alas! was an unconscious accomplice. To us of a later generation it is impossible to view this strange history without a singular mixture of feelings. Awe-struck for the extraordinary literary attainments, and the energy which, under all disadvantages of health and position, turned these talents to the best account; love of the real tender-heartedness which formed the basis of the man's character; pity for the many sufferings to which his morbid sensitiveness exposed him; amazement for the misadventures into which he was hurried; repulsion for the insatiable vanity which prompted his most degrading self-indulgences; horror for the bitter animosities which must have tortured the man who cherished them even more than his victims—are suggested simultaneously by the name of Pope. As we look at him in one or other aspect, such feelings may come uppermost in turn. The most striking sentiment—when we think of him as a literary phenomenon—is admiration for the exquisite skill which enabled him to discharge a function, not of the highest kind, with a perfection rare in any department of literature. It is more difficult to say what will be the dominant element of our feeling about the man. Let us say that it may be the pity which, after a certain time, we may be excused for conceding to the sufferer, as well as physical diseases.

English Men of Letters

EDITED BY JOHN MORLEY

SAMUEL JOHNSON



peacefully that his friends could not determine the exact moment of death.

It was a soft and touching end ; and yet we must once more look at the other side. Warburton and Bolingbroke both appear to have been at the side of the dying man, and before very long they were to be quarrelling over his grave. Pope's will showed at once that his quarrels were hardly to end with his death. He had quarrelled, though the quarrel had been made up, with the generous Allen, for some cause not ascertainable, except that it arose from the mutual displeasure of Mrs. Allen and Miss Blount. It is pleasant to notice that, in the course of the quarrel, Pope mentioned Warburton, in a letter to Miss Blount, as a sneaking parson ; but Warburton was not aware of the flash of sarcasm. Pope, as Johnson puts it, "polluted his will with female resentment." He left a legacy of 150*l.* to Allen, being, as he added, the amount received from his friend—for himself or for charitable purposes ; and requested Allen, if he should refuse the legacy for himself, to pay it to the Bath Hospital. Allen adopted this suggestion, saying quietly that Pope had always been a bad accountant, and would have come nearer the truth if he had added a cypher to the figures.

Another fact came to light, which produced a fiercer outburst. Pope, it was found, had printed a whole edition (1500 copies) of the *Patriot King*, Bolingbroke's most polished work. The motive could have been nothing but a desire to preserve to posterity what Pope considered to be a monument worthy of the highest genius, and was so far complimentary to Bolingbroke. Bolingbroke, however, considered it as an act of gross treachery. Pope had received the work on condition of keeping it strictly

private, and showing it to only a few friends. Moreover, he had corrected it, arranged it, and altered or omitted passages according to his own taste, which naturally did not suit the author's. In 1749 Bolingbroke gave a copy to Mallet for publication, and prefixed an angry statement to expose the breach of trust of "a man on whom the author thought he could entirely depend." Warburton rushed to the defence of Pope and the demolition of Bolingbroke. A savage controversy followed, which survives only in the title of one of Bolingbroke's pamphlets, *A Familiar Epistle to the most Impudent Man living*—a transparent paraphrase for Warburton. Pope's behaviour is too much of a piece with previous underhand transactions, but scarcely deserves further condemnation.

A single touch remains. Pope was buried, by his own directions, in a vault in Twickenham church, near the monument erected to his parents. It contained a simple inscription ending with the words "*Parentibus bene merentibus filius fecit.*" To this, as he directed in his will, was to be added simply "*et sibi.*" This was done; but seventeen years afterwards the clumsy Warburton erected in the same church another monument to Pope himself, with this stupid inscription. *Poeta loquitur.*

For one who would not be buried in Westminster Abbey.

Heroes and kings, your distance keep!
In peace let one poor poet sleep
Who never flatter'd folks like you;
Let Horace blush and Virgil too

Most of us can tell from experience how grievously our posthumous ceremonials often jar upon the tenderest feelings of survivors. Pope's valued friends seem to have done their best to surround the last scene of his life with

painful associations ; and Pope, alas ! was an unconscious accomplice. To us of a later generation it is impossible to close this strange history without a singular mixture of feelings. Admiration for the extraordinary literary talents, respect for the energy which, under all disadvantages of health and position, turned these talents to the best account ; love of the real tender-heartedness which formed the basis of the man's character ; pity for the many sufferings to which his morbid sensitiveness exposed him ; contempt for the meannesses into which he was hurried ; ridicule for the insatiable vanity which prompted his most degrading subterfuges ; horror for the bitter animosities which must have tortured the man who cherished them even more than his victims—are suggested simultaneously by the name of Pope. As we look at him in one or other aspect, each feeling may come uppermost in turn. The most abiding sentiment—when we think of him as a literary phenomenon—is admiration for the exquisite skill which enabled him to discharge a function, not of the highest kind, with a perfection rare in any department of literature. It is more difficult to say what will be the final element in our feeling about the man. Let us hope that it may be the pity which, after a certain lapse of years, we may be excused for conceding to the victim of moral as well as physical diseases.

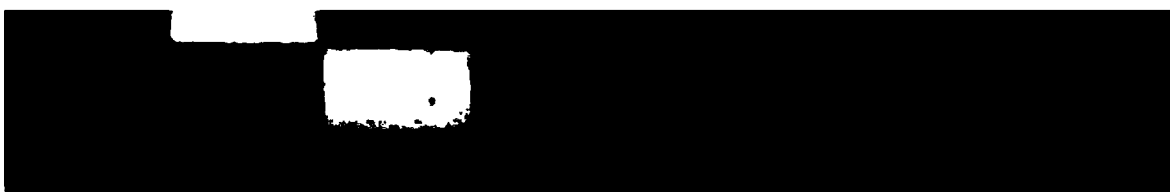
THE END.

English Men of Letters

EDITED BY JOHN MORLEY

SAMUEL JOHNSON







SAMUEL JOHNSON

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SAMUEL JOHNSON



SAMUEL JOHNSON.

CHAPTER I.

CHILDHOOD AND EARLY LIFE.

SAMUEL JOHNSON was born in Lichfield in 1709. His father, Michael Johnson, was a bookseller, highly respected by the cathedral clergy, and for a time sufficiently prosperous to be a magistrate of the town, and, in the year of his son's birth, sheriff of the county. He opened a bookstall on market-days at neighbouring towns, including Birmingham, which was as yet unable to maintain a separate bookseller. The tradesman often exaggerates the prejudices of the class whose wants he supplies, and Michael Johnson was probably a more devoted High Churchman and Tory than many of the cathedral clergy themselves. He reconciled himself with difficulty to taking the oaths against the exiled dynasty. He was a man of considerable mental and physical power, but tormented by hypochondriacal tendencies. His son inherited a share both of his constitution and of his principles. Long afterwards Samuel associated with his childish days a faint but solemn recollection of a lady in diamonds and long black hood. The lady

was Queen Anne, to whom, in compliance with a superstition just dying a natural death, he had been taken by his mother to be touched for the king's evil. The touch was ineffectual. Perhaps, as Boswell suggested, he ought to have been presented to the genuine heirs of the Stuarts in Rome. Disease and superstition had thus stood by his cradle, and they never quitted him during life. The demon of hypochondria was always lying in wait for him, and could be exorcised for a time only by hard work or social excitement. Of this we shall hear enough ; but it may be as well to sum up at once some of the physical characteristics which marked him through life and greatly influenced his career.

The disease had scarred and disfigured features otherwise regular and always impressive. It had seriously injured his eyes, entirely destroying, it seems, the sight of one. He could not, it is said, distinguish a friend's face half a yard off, and pictures were to him meaningless patches, in which he could never see the resemblance to their objects. The statement is perhaps exaggerated ; for he could see enough to condemn a portrait of himself. He expressed some annoyance when Reynolds had painted him with a pen held close to his eye ; and protested that he would not be handed down to posterity as " blinking Sam." It seems that habits of minute attention atoned in some degree for this natural defect. Boswell tells us how Johnson once corrected him as to the precise shape of a mountain ; and Mrs. Thrale says that he was a close and exacting critic of ladies' dress, even to the accidental position of a riband. He could even lay down æsthetical canons upon such matters. He reproved her for wearing a dark dress as unsuitable to a " little creature." " What," he asked, " have not all insects gay colours ? " His insen-

sibility to music was even more pronounced than his dullness of sight. On hearing it said, in praise of a musical performance, that it was in any case difficult, his feeling comment was, "I wish it had been impossible!"

The queer convulsions by which he amazed all beholders were probably connected with his disease, though he and Reynolds ascribed them simply to habit. When entering a doorway with his blind companion, Miss Williams, he would suddenly desert her on the step in order to "whirl and twist about" in strange gesticulations. The performance partook of the nature of a superstitious ceremonial. He would stop in a street or the middle of a room to go through it correctly. Once he collected a laughing mob in Twickenham meadows by his antics; his hands imitating the motions of a jockey riding at full speed and his feet twisting in and out to make heels and toes touch alternately. He presently sat down and took out a *Grotius De Veritate*, over which he "seesawed" so violently that the mob ran back to see what was the matter. Once in such a fit he suddenly twisted off the shoe of a lady who sat by him. Sometimes he seemed to be obeying some hidden impulse, which commanded him to touch every post in a street or tread on the centre of every paving-stone, and would return if his task had not been accurately performed.

In spite of such oddities, he was not only possessed of physical power corresponding to his great height and massive stature, but was something of a proficient at athletic exercises. He was conversant with the theory, at least, of boxing; a knowledge probably acquired from an uncle who kept the ring at Smithfield for a year, and was never beaten in boxing or wrestling. His constitutional fearlessness would have made him a formidable antagonist.

Hawkins describes the oak staff, six feet in length and increasing from one to three inches in diameter, which lay ready to his hand when he expected an attack from Macpherson of Ossian celebrity. Once he is said to have taken up a chair at the theatre upon which a man had seated himself during his temporary absence, and to have tossed it and its occupant bodily into the pit. He would swim into pools said to be dangerous, beat huge dogs into peace, climb trees, and even run races and jump gates. Once at least he went out foxhunting, and though he despised the amusement, was deeply touched by the complimentary assertion that he rode as well as the most illiterate fellow in England. Perhaps the most whimsical of his performances was when, in his fifty-fifth year, he went to the top of a high hill with his friend Langton. "I have not had a roll for a long time," said the great lexicographer suddenly, and, after deliberately emptying his pockets, he laid himself parallel to the edge of the hill, and descended, turning over and over till he came to the bottom. We may believe, as Mrs. Thrale remarks upon his jumping over a stool to show that he was not tired by his hunting, that his performances in this kind were so strange and uncouth that a fear for the safety of his bones quenched the spectator's tendency to laugh.

In such a strange case was imprisoned one of the most vigorous intellects of the time. Vast strength hampered by clumsiness and associated with grievous disease, deep and massive powers of feeling limited by narrow though acute perceptions, were characteristic both of soul and body. These peculiarities were manifested from his early infancy. Miss Seward, a typical specimen of the provincial *précieuse*, attempted to trace them in an epitaph which he was said to have written at the age of three.

Here lies good master duck
Whom Samuel Johnson trod on ;
If it had lived, it had been good luck,
For then we had had an odd one.

The verses, however, were really made by his father, who passed them off as the child's, and illustrate nothing but the paternal vanity. In fact the boy was regarded as something of an infant prodigy. His great powers of memory, characteristic of a mind singularly retentive of all impressions, were early developed. He seemed to learn by intuition. Indolence, as in his after life, alternated with brief efforts of strenuous exertion. His want of sight prevented him from sharing in the ordinary childish sports ; and one of his great pleasures was in reading old romances—a taste which he retained through life. Boys of this temperament are generally despised by their fellows, but Johnson seems to have had the power of enforcing the respect of his companions. Three of the lads used to come for him in the morning and carry him in triumph to school, seated upon the shoulders of one and supported on each side by his companions.

After learning to read at a dame-school, and from a certain Tom Brown, of whom it is only recorded that he published a spelling-book and dedicated it to the Universe, young Samuel was sent to the Lichfield Grammar School, and was afterwards, for a short time, apparently in the character of pupil-teacher, at the school of Stourbridge, in Worcestershire. A good deal of Latin was "whipped into him," and though he complained of the excessive severity of two of his teachers, he was always a believer in the virtues of the rod. A child, he said, who is flogged, "gets his task, and there's an end on't ; whereas by exciting emulation and comparisons of superiority, you lay the

foundations of lasting mischief; you make brothers and sisters hate each other." In practice, indeed, this stern disciplinarian seems to have been specially indulgent to children. The memory of his own sorrows made him value their happiness, and he rejoiced greatly when he at last persuaded a schoolmaster to remit the old-fashioned holiday-task.

Johnson left school at sixteen and spent two years at home, probably in learning his father's business. This seems to have been the chief period of his studies. Long afterwards he said that he knew almost as much at eighteen as he did at the age of fifty-three—the date of the remark. His father's shop would give him many opportunities, and he devoured what came in his way with the indiscriminating eagerness of a young student. His intellectual resembled his physical appetite. He gorged books. He tore the hearts out of them, but did not study systematically. Do you read books through? he asked indignantly of some one who expected from him such supererogatory labour. His memory enabled him to accumulate great stores of a desultory and unsystematic knowledge. Somehow he became a fine Latin scholar, though never first-rate as a Grecian. The direction of his studies was partly determined by the discovery of a folio of Petrarch, lying on a shelf where he was looking for apples; and one of his earliest literary plans, never carried out, was an edition of Politian, with a history of Latin poetry from the time of Petrarch. When he went to the University at the end of this period, he was in possession of a very unusual amount of reading.

Meanwhile he was beginning to feel the pressure of poverty. His father's affairs were probably getting into disorder. One anecdote—it is one which it is difficult

to read without emotion—refers to this period. Many years afterwards, Johnson, worn by disease and the hard struggle of life, was staying at Lichfield, where a few old friends still survived, but in which every street must have revived the memories of the many who had long since gone over to the majority. He was missed one morning at breakfast, and did not return till supper-time. Then he told how his time had been passed. On that day fifty years before, his father, confined by illness, had begged him to take his place to sell books at a stall at Uttoxeter. Pride made him refuse. "To do away with the sin of this disobedience, I this day went in a post-chaise to Uttoxeter, and going into the market at the time of high business, uncovered my head and stood with it bare an hour before the stall which my father had formerly used, exposed to the sneers of the standers-by and the inclemency of the weather; a penance by which I trust I have propitiated Heaven for this only instance, I believe, of contumacy to my father." If the anecdote illustrates the touch of superstition in Johnson's mind, it reveals too that sacred depth of tenderness which ennobled his character. No repentance can ever wipe out the past or make it be as though it had not been; but the remorse of a fine character may be transmuted into a permanent source of nobler views of life and the world.

There are difficulties in determining the circumstances and duration of Johnson's stay at Oxford. He began residence at Pembroke College in 1728. It seems probable that he received some assistance from a gentleman whose son took him as companion, and from the clergy of Lichfield, to whom his father was known, and who were aware of the son's talents. Possibly his college assisted him during part of the time. It

is certain that he left without taking a degree, though he probably resided for nearly three years. It is certain, also, that his father's bankruptcy made his stay difficult, and that the period must have been one of trial.

The effect of the Oxford residence upon Johnson's mind was characteristic. The lad already suffered from the attacks of melancholy, which sometimes drove him to the borders of insanity. At Oxford, Law's *Serious Call* gave him the strong religious impressions which remained through life. But he does not seem to have been regarded as a gloomy or a religious youth by his contemporaries. When told in after years that he had been described as a "gay and frolicsome fellow," he replied, "Ah! sir, I was mad and violent. It was bitterness which they mistook for frolic. I was miserably poor, and I thought to fight my way by my literature and my wit; so I disregarded all power and all authority." Though a hearty supporter of authority in principle, Johnson was distinguished through life by the strongest spirit of personal independence and self respect. He held, too, the sound doctrine, deplored by his respectable biographer Hawkins, that the scholar's life, like the Christian's, levelled all distinctions of rank. When an officious benefactor put a pair of new shoes at his door, he threw them away with indignation. He seems to have treated his tutors with a contempt which Boswell politely attributed to "great fortitude of mind," but Johnson himself set down as "stark insensibility." The life of a poor student is not, one may fear, even yet exempt from much bitterness, and in those days the position was far more servile than at present. The servitors and sizars had much to bear from richer companions. A proud melancholy lad, conscious of great powers, had

to meet with hard rebuffs, and tried to meet them by returning scorn for scorn.

Such distresses, however, did not shake Johnson's rooted Toryism. He fully imbibed, if he did not already share, the strongest prejudices of the place, and his misery never produced a revolt against the system, though it may have fostered insolence to individuals. Three of the most eminent men with whom Johnson came in contact in later life, had also been students at Oxford. Wesley, his senior by six years, was a fellow of Lincoln whilst Johnson was an undergraduate, and was learning at Oxford the necessity of rousing his countrymen from the religious lethargy into which they had sunk. "Have not pride and haughtiness of spirit, impatience, and peevishness, sloth and indolence, gluttony and sensuality, and even a proverbial uselessness been objected to us, perhaps not always by our enemies nor wholly without ground?" So said Wesley, preaching before the University of Oxford in 1744, and the words in his mouth imply more than the preacher's formality. Adam Smith, Johnson's junior by fourteen years, was so impressed by the utter indifference of Oxford authorities to their duties, as to find in it an admirable illustration of the consequences of the neglect of the true principles of supply and demand implied in the endowment of learning. Gibbon, his junior by twenty-eight years, passed at Oxford the "most idle and unprofitable" months of his whole life; and was, he said, as willing to disclaim the university for a mother, as she could be to renounce him for a son. Oxford, as judged by these men, was remarkable as an illustration of the spiritual and intellectual decadence of a body which at other times has been a centre of great movements of thought. Johnson, though he had a rougher experience than any of the three,

loved Oxford as though she had not been a harsh step-mother to his youth. Sir, he said fondly of his college, "we are a nest of singing-birds." Most of the strains are now pretty well forgotten, and some of them must at all times have been such as we scarcely associate with the nightingale. Johnson, however, cherished his college friendships, delighted in paying visits to his old university, and was deeply touched by the academical honours by which Oxford long afterwards recognized an eminence scarcely fostered by its protection. Far from sharing the doctrines of Adam Smith, he only regretted that the universities were not richer, and expressed a desire which will be understood by advocates of the "endowment of research," that there were many places of a thousand a year at Oxford.

On leaving the University, in 1731, the world was all before him. His father died in the end of the year, and Johnson's whole immediate inheritance was twenty pounds. Where was he to turn for daily bread? Even in those days, most gates were barred with gold and opened but to golden keys. The greatest chance for a poor man was probably through the Church. The career of Warburton, who rose from a similar position to a bishopric might have been rivalled by Johnson, and his connexions with Lichfield might, one would suppose, have helped him to a start. It would be easy to speculate upon causes which might have hindered such a career. In later life, he more than once refused to take orders upon the promise of a living. Johnson, as we know him, was a man of the world; though a religious man of the world. He represents the secular rather than the ecclesiastical type. So far as his mode of teaching goes, he is rather a disciple of Socrates than of St. Paul or Wealey. According to

him, a "tavern-chair" was "the throne of human felicity," and supplied a better arena than the pulpit for the utterance of his message to mankind. And, though his external circumstances doubtless determined his method, there was much in his character which made it congenial. Johnson's religious emotions were such as to make habitual reserve almost a sanitary necessity. They were deeply coloured by his constitutional melancholy. Fears of death and hell were prominent in his personal creed. To trade upon his feelings like a charlatan would have been abhorrent to his masculine character; and to give them full and frequent utterance like a genuine teacher of mankind would have been to imperil his sanity. If he had gone through the excitement of a Methodist conversion, he would probably have ended his days in a madhouse.

Such considerations, however, were not, one may guess, distinctly present to Johnson himself; and the offer of a college fellowship or of private patronage might probably have altered his career. He might have become a learned recluse or a struggling Parson Adams. College fellowships were less open to talent then than now, and patrons were never too propitious to the uncouth giant, who had to force his way by sheer labour, and fight for his own hand. Accordingly, the young scholar tried to coin his brains into money by the most depressing and least hopeful of employments. By becoming an usher in a school, he could at least turn his talents to account with little delay, and that was the most pressing consideration. By one schoolmaster he was rejected on the ground that his infirmities would excite the ridicule of the boys. Under another he passed some months of "complicated misery," and could never think of the school without horror and aversion. Finding this situation intolerable, he settled in Birmingham, in 1733,

to be near an old schoolfellow, named Hector, who was apparently beginning to practise as a surgeon. Johnson seems to have had some acquaintances among the comfortable families in the neighbourhood; but his means of living are obscure. Some small literary work came in his way. He contributed essays to a local paper, and translated a book of Travels in Abyssinia. For this, his first publication, he received five guineas. In 1734 he made certain overtures to Cave, a London publisher, of the result of which I shall have to speak presently. For the present it is pretty clear that the great problem of self-support had been very inadequately solved.

Having no money and no prospects, Johnson naturally married. The attractions of the lady were not very manifest to others than her husband. She was the widow of a Birmingham mercer named Porter. Her age at the time (1735) of the second marriage was forty-six, the bridegroom being not quite twenty-six. The biographer's eye was not fixed upon Johnson till after his wife's death, and we have little in the way of authentic description of her person and character. Garrick, who had known her, said that she was very fat, with cheeks coloured both by paint and cordials, flimsy and fantastic in dress and affected in her manners. She is said to have treated her husband with some contempt, adopting the airs of an antiquated beauty, which he returned by elaborate deference. Garrick used his wonderful powers of mimicry to make fun of the uncouth caresses of the husband, and the courtly Beauclerc used to provoke the smiles of his audience by repeating Johnson's assertion that "it was a love-match on both sides." One incident of the wedding-day was ominous. As the newly-married couple rode back from church, Mrs. Johnson showed her

spirit by reproaching her husband for riding too fast, and then for lagging behind. Resolved "not to be made the slave of caprice," he pushed on briskly till he was fairly out of sight. When she rejoined him, as he, of course, took care that she should soon do, she was in tears. Mrs. Johnson apparently knew how to regain supremacy; but, at any rate, Johnson loved her devotedly during life, and clung to her memory during a widowhood of more than thirty years, as fondly as if they had been the most pattern hero and heroine of romantic fiction.

Whatever Mrs. Johnson's charms, she seems to have been a woman of good sense and some literary judgment. Johnson's grotesque appearance did not prevent her from saying to her daughter on their first introduction, "This is the most sensible man I ever met." Her praises were, we may believe, sweeter to him than those of the severest critics, or the most fervent of personal flatterers. Like all good men, Johnson loved good women, and liked to have on hand a flirtation or two, as warm as might be within the bounds of due decorum. But nothing affected his fidelity to his 'Tetty or displaced her image in his mind. He remembered her in many solemn prayers, and such words as "this was dear Tetty's book:" or, "this was a prayer which dear Tetty was accustomed to say," were found written by him in many of her books of devotion.

Mrs. Johnson had one other recommendation—a fortune, namely, of £800—little enough, even then, as a provision for the support of the married pair, but enough to help Johnson to make a fresh start. In 1736, there appeared an advertisement in the *Gentleman's Magazine*. "At Edial, near Lichfield, in Staffordshire, young gentlemen are boarded and taught the Latin and Greek languages by Samuel Johnson." If, as seems probable, Mrs. Johnson's

money supplied the funds for this venture, it was an unlucky speculation.

Johnson was not fitted to be a pedagogue. Success in that profession implies skill in the management of pupils, but perhaps still more decidedly in the management of parents. Johnson had little qualifications in either way. As a teacher he would probably have been alternately despotic and over-indulgent; and, on the other hand, a single glance at the rough Dominie Saumpson would be enough to frighten the ordinary parent off his premises. Very few pupils came, and they seem to have profited little, if a story as told of two of his pupils refers to this time. After some months of instruction in English history, he asked them who had destroyed the monasteries? One of them gave no answer; the other replied "Jeems Christ." Johnson, however, could boast of one eminent pupil in David Garrick, though, by Garrick's account, his master was of little service except as affording an excellent mark for his early powers of ridicule. The school, or "academy," failed after a year and a half; and Johnson, once more at a loss for employment, resolved to try the great experiment, made so often and so often unsuccessfully. He left Lichfield to seek his fortune in London. Garrick accompanied him, and the two brought a common letter of introduction to the master of an academy from Gilbert Walmaley, registrar of the Prerogative Court in Lichfield. Long afterwards Johnson took an opportunity in the *Lives of the Poets*, of expressing his warm regard for the memory of his early friend, to whom he had been recommended by a community of literary tastes, in spite of party differences and great inequality of age. Walmaley says in his letter, that "one Johnson" is about to accompany Garrick to London, in order to try his fate with a tragedy and get himself em

ployed in translation. Johnson, he adds, "is a very good scholar and poet, and I have great hopes will turn out a fine tragedy writer."

The letter is dated March 2nd, 1737. Before recording what is known of his early career thus started, it will be well to take a glance at the general condition of the profession of Literature in England at this period.

CHAPTER II.

LITERARY CAREER.

"No man but a blockhead," said Johnson, "ever wrote except for money." The doctrine is, of course, perfectly outrageous, and specially calculated to shock people who like to keep it for their private use, instead of proclaiming it in public. But it is a good expression of that huge contempt for the foppery of high-flown sentiment which, as is not uncommon with Johnson, passes into something which would be cynical if it were not half-humorous. In this case it implies also the contempt of the professional for the amateur. Johnson despised gentlemen who dabbled in his craft, as a man whose life is devoted to music or painting despises the ladies and gentlemen who treat those arts as fashionable accomplishments. An author was, according to him, a man who turned out books as a brick-layer turns out houses or a tailor coats. So long as he supplied a good article and got a fair price, he was a fool to grumble, and a humbug to affect loftier motives.

Johnson was not the first professional author, in this sense, but perhaps the first man who made the profession respectable. The principal habitat of authors, in his age, was Grub Street—a region which, in later years, has ceased to be ashamed of itself, and has adopted the more pretentious

name Bohemia. The original Grub Street, it is said, first became associated with authorship during the increase of pamphlet literature, produced by the civil wars. Fox, the martyrologist, was one of its original inhabitants. Another of its heroes was a certain Mr. Welby, of whom the sole record is, that he "lived there forty years without being seen of any." In fact, it was a region of holes and corners, calculated to illustrate that great advantage of London life, which a friend of Boswell's described by saying, that a man could there be always "close to his burrow." The "burrow" which received the luckless wight, was indeed no pleasant refuge. Since poor Green, in the earliest generation of dramatists, bought his "groat'sworth of wit with a million of repentance," too many of his brethren had trodden the path which led to hopeless misery or death in a tavern brawl! The history of men who had to support themselves by their pens, is a record of almost universal gloom. The names of Spenser, of Butler, and of Otway, are enough to remind us that even warm contemporary recognition was not enough to raise an author above the fear of dying in want of necessaries. The two great dictators of literature, Ben Jonson in the earlier and Dryden in the later part of the century, only kept their heads above water by help of the laureate's pittance, though reckless imprudence, encouraged by the precarious life, was the cause of much of their sufferings. Patronage gave but a fitful resource, and the author could hope at most but an occasional crust, flung to him from better provided tables.

In the happy days of Queen Anne, it is true, there had been a gleam of prosperity. Many authors, Addison, Congreve, Swift, and others of less name, had won by their pens not only temporary profits but permanent

places. The class which came into power at the Revolution was willing for a time, to share some of the public patronage with men distinguished for intellectual eminence. Patronage was liberal when the funds came out of other men's pockets. But, as the system of party government developed, it soon became evident that this involved a waste of power. There were enough political partisans to absorb all the comfortable sinecures to be had ; and such money as was still spent upon literature, was given in return for services equally degrading to giver and receiver. Nor did the patronage of literature reach the poor inhabitants of Grub Street. Addison's poetical power might suggest or justify the gift of a place from his elegant friends ; but a man like De Foe, who really looked to his pen for great part of his daily subsistence, was below the region of such prizes, and was obliged in later years not only to write inferior books for money, but to sell himself and act as a spy upon his fellows. One great man, it is true, made an independence by literature. Pope received some £8000 for his translation of Homer, by the then popular mode of subscription—a kind of compromise between the systems of patronage and public support. But his success caused little pleasure in Grub Street. No love was lost between the poet and the dwellers in this dismal region. Pope was its deadliest enemy, and carried on an internecine warfare with its inmates, which has enriched our language with a great satire, but which wasted his powers upon low objects, and tempted him into disgraceful artifices. The life of the unfortunate victims, pilloried in the *Dunciad* and accused of the unpardonable sins of poverty and dependence, was too often one which might have extorted sympathy even from a thin-skinned poet and critic.

Illustrations of the manners and customs of that Grub

Street of which Johnson was to become an inmate are only too abundant. The best writers of the day could tell of hardships endured in that dismal region. Richardson went on the sound principle of keeping his shop that his shop might keep him. But the other great novelists of the century have painted from life the miseries of an author's existence. Fielding, Smollett, and Goldsmith have described the poor wretches with a vivid force which gives sadness to the reflection that each of those great men was drawing upon his own experience, and that they each died in distress. The *Case of Authors by Profession* to quote the title of a pamphlet by Ralph, was indeed a wretched one, when the greatest of their number had an incessant struggle to keep the wolf from the door. The life of an author resembled the proverbial existence of the flying-fish, chased by enemies in sea and in air; he only escaped from the slavery of the bookseller's garret, to fly from the bailiff or rot in the debtor's ward or the spunging-house. Many strange half-pathetic and half-ludicrous anecdotes survive to recall the sorrows and the recklessness of the luckless scribblers who, like one of Johnson's acquaintance, "lived in London and hung loose upon society."

There was Samuel Boyse, for example, whose poem on the *Deity* is quoted with high praise by Fielding. Once Johnson had generously exerted himself for his comrade in misery, and collected enough money by sixpences to get the poet's clothes out of pawn. Two days afterwards, Boyse had spent the money and was found in bed, covered only with a blanket, through two holes in which he passed his arms to write. Boyse, it appears, when still in this position would lay out his last half-guinea to buy truffles and mushrooms for his last scrap of beef. Of another scribbler Johnson said, "I honour Derrick for his strength of mind.

One night when Floyd (another poor author) was wandering about the streets at night, he found Derrick fast asleep upon a bulk. Upon being suddenly awaked, Derrick started up; 'My dear Floyd, I am sorry to see you in this destitute state; will you go home with me to my *lodgings?*' " Authors in such circumstances might be forced into such a wonderful contract as that which is reported to have been drawn up by one Gardner with Rolt and Christopher Smart. They were to write a monthly miscellany, sold at sixpence, and to have a third of the profits; but they were to write nothing else, and the contract was to last for ninety-nine years. Johnson himself summed up the trade upon earth by the lines in which Virgil describes the entrance to hell; thus translated by Dryden:—

Just in the gate and in the jaws of hell,
Revengeful cares and sullen sorrows dwell.
And pale diseases and repining age,
Want, fear, and famine's unresisted rage:
Here toils and Death and Death's half-brother, Sleep—
Forms, terrible to view, their sentry keep.

"Now," said Johnson, "almost all these apply exactly to an author; these are the concomitants of a printing-house."

Judicious authors, indeed, were learning how to make literature pay. Some of them belonged to the class who understood the great truth that the scissors are a very superior implement to the pen considered as a tool of literary trade. Such, for example, was that respectable Dr. John Campbell, whose parties Johnson ceased to frequent lest Scotchmen should say of any good bits of work, "Ay, ay, he has learnt this of Cawmell." Campbell, he said quaintly, was a good man, a pious man. "I am afraid he

has not been in the inside of a church for many years ; but he never passes a church without pulling off his hat. This shows he has good principles,"—of which in fact there seems to be some less questionable evidence. Campbell supported himself by writings chiefly of the *Encyclopedia* or *Gazetteer* kind ; and became, still in Johnson's phrase, "the richest author that ever grazed the common of literature." A more singular and less reputable character was that impudent quack, Sir John Hill, who, with his insolent attacks upon the Royal Society, pretentious botanical and medical compilations, plays, novels, and magazine articles, has long sunk into utter oblivion. It is said of him that he pursued every branch of literary quackery with greater contempt of character than any man of his time, and that he made as much as £1500 in a year ;—three times as much, it is added, as any one writer ever made in the same period.

The political scribblers—the Arnalls, Gordons, Trenchards, Guthries, Ralphs, and Amhersts, whose names meet us in the notes to the *Dunciad* and in contemporary pamphlets and newspapers—form another variety of the class. Their general character may be estimated from Johnson's classification of the "Scribbler for a Party" with the "Commissioner of Excise," as the "two lowest of all human beings." "Ralph," says one of the notes to the *Dunciad*, "ended in the common sink of all such writers, a political newspaper." The prejudice against such employment has scarcely died out in our own day, and may be still traced in the account of Pendennis and his friend Warrington. People who do dirty work must be paid for it ; and the Secret Committee which inquired into Walpole's administration reported that in ten years, from 1731 to 1741, a sum of £50,077 18s. had been paid to writers

and printers of newspapers. Arnall, now remembered chiefly by Pope's line,—

Spirit of Arnall, aid me whilst I lie !

had received, in four years, £10,997 6s. 8d. of this amount. The more successful writers might look to pensions or preferment. Francis, for example, the translator of Horace, and the father, in all probability, of the most formidable of the whole tribe of such literary gladiators, received, it is said, 900*l.* a year for his work, besides being appointed to a rectory and the chaplaincy of Chelsea:

It must, moreover, be observed that the price of literary work was rising during the century, and that, in the latter half, considerable sums were received by successful writers. Religious as well as dramatic literature had begun to be commercially valuable. Baxter, in the previous century, made from 60*l.* to 80*l.* a year by his pen. The copyright of Tillotson's *Sermons* was sold, it is said, upon his death for £2500. Considerable sums were made by the plan of publishing by subscription. It is said that 4600 people subscribed to the two posthumous volumes of Conybeare's *Sermons*. A few poets trod in Pope's steps. Young made more than £3000 for the *Satires* called the *Universal Passion*, published, I think, on the same plan ; and the Duke of Wharton is said, though the report is doubtful, to have given him £2000 for the same work. Gay made £1000 by his *Poems* ; £400 for the copyright of the *Beggar's Opera*, and three times as much for its second part, *Polly*. Among historians, Hume seems to have received £700 a volume ; Smollett made £2000 by his catchpenny rival publication ; Henry made £3300 by his history ; and Robertson, after the booksellers had made £6000 by his *History of Scotland*, sold his *Charles V.* for £4500.

Amongst the novelists, Feilding received £700 for *Tom Jones* and £1000 for *Amelia*; Sterne, for the second edition of the first part of *Tristram Shandy* and for two additional volumes, received £650; besides which Lord Fauconberg gave him a living (most inappropriate acknowledgment, one would say!), and Warburton a purse of gold. Goldsmith received 60 guineas for the immortal *Vicar*, a fair price, according to Johnson, for a work by a then unknown author. By each of his plays he made about £500, and for the eight volumes of his *Natural History* he received 800 guineas. Towards the end of the century, Mrs. Radcliffe got £500 for the *Mysteries of Udolpho*, and £800 for her last work, the *Italian*. Perhaps the largest sum given for a single book was £6000 paid to Hawkesworth for his account of the South Sea Expeditions. Horne Tooke received from £4000 to £5000 for the *Diversions of Purley*; and it is added by his biographer, though it seems to be incredible, that Hayley received no less than £11,000 for the *Life of Cowper*. This was, of course, in the present century, when we are already approaching the period of Scott and Byron.

Such sums prove that some few authors might achieve independence by a successful work; and it is well to remember them in considering Johnson's life from the business point of view. Though he never grumbled at the booksellers, and on the contrary, was always ready to defend them as liberal men, he certainly failed, whether from carelessness or want of skill, to turn them to as much profit as many less celebrated rivals. Meanwhile, pecuniary success of this kind was beyond any reasonable hopes. A man who has to work like his own dependent Levett, and to make the "modest toil of every day" supply "the wants of every day," must discount his talents until he

can secure leisure for some more sustained effort. Johnson, coming up from the country to seek for work, could have but a slender prospect of rising above the ordinary level of his Grub Street companions and rivals. One publisher to whom he applied suggested to him that it would be his wisest course to buy a porter's knot and carry trunks; and, in the struggle which followed, Johnson must sometimes have been tempted to regret that the advice was not taken.

The details of the ordeal through which he was now to pass have naturally vanished. Johnson, long afterwards, burst into tears on recalling the trials of this period. But, at the time, no one was interested in noting the history of an obscure literary drudge, and it has not been described by the sufferer himself. What we know is derived from a few letters and incidental references of Johnson in later days. On first arriving in London he was almost destitute, and had to join with Garrick in raising a loan of five pounds, which, we are glad to say, was repaid. He dined for eightpence at an ordinary: a cut of meat for sixpence, bread for a penny, and a penny to the waiter, making out the charge. One of his acquaintance had told him that a man might live in London for thirty pounds a year. Ten pounds would pay for clothes; a garret might be hired for eighteen-pence a week; if any one asked for an address, it was easy to reply, "I am to be found at such a place." Threepence laid out at a coffee-house would enable him to pass some hours a day in good company; dinner might be had for sixpence, a bread-and-milk breakfast for a penny, and supper was superfluous. On clean shirt day you might go abroad and pay visits. This leaves a surplus of nearly one pound from the thirty.

Johnson, however, had a wife to support ; and to raise funds for even so ascetic a mode of existence required steady labour. Often, it seems, his purse was at the very lowest ebb. One of his letters to his employer is signed *impransus* ; and whether or not the dinnerless condition was in this case accidental, or significant of absolute impecuniosity, the less pleasant interpretation is not improbable. He would walk the streets all night with his friend, Savage, when their combined funds could not pay for a lodging. One night, as he told Sir Joshua Reynolds in later years, they thus perambulated St. James's Square, warming themselves by declaiming against Walpole, and nobly resolved that they would stand by their country.

Patriotic enthusiasm, however, as no one knew better than Johnson, is a poor substitute for bed and supper. Johnson suffered acutely and made some attempts to escape from his misery. To the end of his life, he was grateful to those who had lent him a helping hand. "Harry Hervey," he said of one of them shortly before his death, "was a vicious man, but very kind to me. If you call a dog Hervey, I shall love him." Pope was impressed by the excellence of his first poem, *London*, and induced Lord Gower to write to a friend to beg Swift to obtain a degree for Johnson from the University of Dublin. The terms of this circuitous application, curious, as bringing into connexion three of the most eminent men of letters of the day, prove that the youngest of them was at the time (1739) in deep distress. The object of the degree was to qualify Johnson for a mastership of £60 a year, which would make him happy for life. He would rather, said Lord Gower, die upon the road to Dublin if an examination were necessary, "than be starved to death in translating for booksellers, which has been his

only subsistence for some time past." The application failed, however, and the want of a degree was equally fatal to another application to be admitted to practise at Doctor's Commons.

Literature was thus perforce Johnson's sole support; and by literature was meant, for the most part, drudgery of the kind indicated by the phrase, "translating for booksellers." While still in Lichfield, Johnson had, as I have said, written to Cave, proposing to become a contributor to the *Gentleman's Magazine*. The letter was one of those which a modern editor receives by the dozen, and answers as perfunctorily as his conscience will allow. It seems, however, to have made some impression upon Cave, and possibly led to Johnson's employment by him on his first arrival in London. From 1738 he was employed both on the *Magazine* and in some jobs of translation.

Edward Cave, to whom we are thus introduced, was a man of some mark in the history of literature. Johnson always spoke of him with affection and afterwards wrote his life in complimentary terms. Cave, though a clumsy, phlegmatic person of little cultivation, seems to have been one of those men who, whilst destitute of real critical powers, have a certain instinct for recognizing the commercial value of literary wares. He had become by this time well-known as the publisher of a magazine which survives to this day. Journals containing summaries of passing events had already been started. Boyer's *Political State of Great Britain* began in 1711. *The Historical Register*, which added to a chronicle some literary notices, was started in 1716. *The Grub Street Journal* was another journal with fuller critical notices, which first appeared in 1730; and these two seem to have been superseded by the *Gentleman's Magazine*, started by Cave in the next year.

Johnson saw in it an opening for the employment of his literary talents; and regarded its contributors with that awe so natural in youthful aspirants, and at once so comic and pathetic to writers of a little experience. The names of many of Cave's staff are preserved in a note to Hawkins. One or two of them, such as Birch and Akenside, have still a certain interest for students of literature; but few have heard of the great Moses Browne, who was regarded as the great poetical light of the magazine. Johnson looked up to him as a leader in his craft, and was graciously taken by Cave to an alehouse in Clerkenwell, where, wrapped in a horseman's coat, and "a great bushy uncombed wig," he saw Mr. Browne sitting at the end of a long table, in a cloud of tobacco-smoke, and felt the satisfaction of a true hero-worshipper.

It is needless to describe in detail the literary task-work done by Johnson at this period, the Latin poems which he contributed in praise of Cave, and of Cave's friends, or the Jacobite squibs by which he relieved his anti-ministerialist feelings. One incident of the period doubtless refreshed the soul of many authors, who have shared Campbell's gratitude to Napoleon for the sole redeeming action of his life—the shooting of a bookseller. Johnson was employed by Osborne, a rough specimen of the trade, to make a catalogue of the Harleian Library. Osborne offensively reproved him for negligence, and Johnson knocked him down with a folio. The book with which the feat was performed (*Biblia Græca Septuaginta*, fol. 1594, Frankfort) was in existence in a bookseller's shop at Cambridge in 1812, and should surely have been placed in some safe author's museum.

The most remarkable of Johnson's performances as a hack writer deserves a brief notice. He was one of the

first of reporters. Cave published such reports of the debates in Parliament as were then allowed by the jealousy of the Legislature, under the title of *The Senate of Lilliput*. Johnson was the author of the debates from Nov. 1740 to February 1742. Persons were employed to attend in the two Houses, who brought home notes of the speeches, which were then put into shape by Johnson. Long afterwards, at a dinner at Foot's, Francis (the father of Junius) mentioned a speech of Pitt's as the best he had ever read, and superior to anything in Demosthenes. Hereupon Johnson replied, "I wrote that speech in a garret in Exeter Street." When the company applauded not only his eloquence but his impartiality, Johnson replied, "That is not quite true; I saved appearances tolerably well, but I took care that the Whig dogs should not have the best of it." The speeches passed for a time as accurate; though, in truth, it has been proved and it is easy to observe, that they are, in fact, very vague reflections of the original. The editors of Chesterfield's Works published two of the speeches, and, to Johnson's considerable amusement, declared that one of them resembled Demosthenes and the other Cicero. It is plain enough to the modern reader that, if so, both of the ancient orators must have written true Johnsonese; and, in fact, the style of the true author is often as plainly marked in many of these compositions as in the *Rambler* or *Rasselas*. For this deception, such as it was, Johnson expressed penitence at the end of his life, though he said that he had ceased to write when he found that they were taken as genuine. He would not be "accessory to the propagation of falsehood."

Another of Johnson's works which appeared in 1744 requires notice both for its intrinsic merit, and its auto-

biographical interest. The most remarkable of his Grub-Street companions was the Richard Savage already mentioned. Johnson's life of him written soon after his death is one of his most forcible performances, and the best extant illustration of the life of the struggling authors of the time. Savage claimed to be the illegitimate son of the Countess of Macclesfield, who was divorced from her husband in the year of his birth on account of her connexion with his supposed father, Lord Rivers. According to the story, believed by Johnson, and published without her contradiction in the mother's lifetime, she not only disavowed her son, but cherished an unnatural hatred for him. She told his father that he was dead, in order that he might not be benefited by the father's will; she tried to have him kidnapped and sent to the plantations; and she did her best to prevent him from receiving a pardon when he had been sentenced to death for killing a man in a tavern brawl. However this may be, and there are reasons for doubt, the story was generally believed, and caused much sympathy for the supposed victim. Savage was at one time protected by the kindness of Steele, who published his story, and sometimes employed him as a literary assistant. When Steele became disgusted with him, he received generous help from the actor Wilks and from Mrs. Oldfield, to whom he had been introduced by some dramatic efforts. Then he was taken up by Lord Tyrconnel, but abandoned by him after a violent quarrel; he afterwards called himself a volunteer laureate, and received a pension of 50*l.* a year from Queen Caroline; on her death he was thrown into deep distress, and helped by a subscription to which Pope was the chief contributor, on condition of retiring to the country. Ultimately he quarrelled with his last protectors, and ended by dying in a debtor's prison.

Various poetical works, now utterly forgotten, obtained for him scanty profit. This career sufficiently reveals the character. Savage belonged to the very common type of men, who seem to employ their whole talents to throw away their chances in life, and to disgust every one who offers them a helping hand. He was, however, a man of some talent, though his poems are now hopelessly unreadable, and seems to have had a singular attraction for Johnson. The biography is curiously marked by Johnson's constant effort to put the best face upon faults, which he has too much love of truth to conceal. The explanation is, partly, that Johnson conceived himself to be avenging a victim of cruel oppression. "This mother," he says, after recording her vindictiveness, "is still alive, and may perhaps even yet, though her malice was often defeated, enjoy the pleasure of reflecting that the life, which she often endeavoured to destroy, was at last shortened by her maternal offices; that though she could not transport her son to the plantations, bury him in the shop of a mechanic, or hasten the hand of the public executioner, she has yet had the satisfaction of embittering all his hours, and forcing him into exigencies that hurried on his death."

But it is also probable that Savage had a strong influence upon Johnson's mind at a very impressible part of his career. The young man, still ignorant of life and full of reverent enthusiasm for the literary magnates of his time, was impressed by the varied experience of his companion, and, it may be, flattered by his intimacy. Savage, he says admiringly, had enjoyed great opportunities of seeing the most conspicuous men of the day in their private life. He was shrewd and inquisitive enough to use his opportunities well. "More circumstances to constitute a critic on human life could not easily concur." The only phrase which survives

to justify this remark is Savage's statement about Walpole, that "the whole range of his mind was from obscenity to politics, and from politics to obscenity." We may, however, guess what was the special charm of the intercourse to Johnson. Savage was an expert in that science of human nature, learnt from experience not from books, upon which Johnson set so high a value, and of which he was destined to become the authorized expositor. There were, moreover, resemblances between the two men. They were both admired and sought out for their conversational powers. Savage, indeed, seems to have lived chiefly by the people who entertained him for talk, till he had disgusted them by his insolence and his utter disregard of time and propriety. He would, like Johnson, sit up talking beyond midnight, and next day decline to rise till dinner-time, though his favourite drink was not, like Johnson's, free from intoxicating properties. Both of them had a lofty pride, which Johnson heartily commends in Savage, though he has difficulty in palliating some of its manifestations. One of the stories reminds us of an anecdote already related of Johnson himself. Some clothes had been left for Savage at a coffeehouse by a person who, out of delicacy, concealed his name. Savage, however, resented some want of ceremony, and refused to enter the house again till the clothes had been removed.

What was honourable pride in Johnson was, indeed, simple arrogance in Savage. He asked favours, his biographer says, without submission, and resented refusal as an insult. He had too much pride to acknowledge, but not too much to receive, obligations; enough to quarrel with his charitable benefactors, but not enough to make him rise to independence of their charity. His pension would have sufficed to keep him, only that as soon as he received it he

retired from the sight of all his acquaintance, and came back before long as penniless as before. This conduct, observes his biographer, was "very particular." It was hardly so singular as objectionable; and we are not surprised to be told that he was rather a "friend of goodness" than himself a good man. In short, we may say of him as Beauclerk said of a friend of Boswell's that, if he had excellent principles, he did not wear them out in practice.

There is something quaint about this picture of a thorough-paced scamp, admiringly painted by a virtuous man; forced, in spite of himself, to make it a likeness, and striving in vain to make it attractive. But it is also pathetic when we remember that Johnson shared some part at least of his hero's miseries. "On a bulk, in a cellar, or in a glass-house, among thieves and beggars, was to be found the author of *The Wanderer*, the man of exalted sentiments, extensive views, and curious observations; the man whose remarks on life might have assisted the statesman, whose ideas of virtue might have enlightened the moralist, whose eloquence might have influenced senators, and whose delicacy might have polished courts." Very shocking, no doubt, and yet hardly surprising under the circumstances! To us it is more interesting to remember that the author of the *Rambler* was not only a sympathizer, but a fellow-sufferer with the author of the *Wanderer*, and shared the queer "lodgings" of his friend, as Floyd shared the lodgings of Derrick. Johnson happily came unscathed through the ordeal which was too much for poor Savage, and could boast with perfect truth in later life that "no man, who ever lived by literature, had lived more independently than I have done." It was in so strange a school, and under such questionable teaching that Johnson formed his conception of the world and of the con-

duct befitting its inmates. One characteristic conclusion is indicated in the opening passage of the life. It has always been observed, he says, that men eminent by nature or fortune are not generally happy: "whether it be that apparent superiority incites great designs, and great designs are naturally liable to fatal miscarriages; or that the general lot of mankind is misery, and the misfortunes of those, whose eminence drew upon them an universal attention, have been more carefully recorded because they were more generally observed, and have in reality been only more conspicuous than those of others, not more frequent or more severe."

The last explanation was that which really commended itself to Johnson. Nobody had better reason to know that obscurity might conceal a misery as bitter as any that fell to the lot of the most eminent. The gloom due to his constitutional temperament was intensified by the sense that he and his wife were dependent upon the goodwill of a narrow and ignorant tradesman for the scantiest maintenance. How was he to reach some solid standing-ground above the hopeless mire of Grub Street? As a journeyman author he could make both ends meet, but only on condition of incessant labour. Illness and misfortune would mean constant dependence upon charity or bondage to creditors. To get ahead of the world it was necessary to distinguish himself in some way from the herd of needy competitors. He had come up from Lichfield with a play in his pocket, but the play did not seem at present to have much chance of emerging. Meanwhile he published a poem which did something to give him a general reputation.

London—an imitation of the Third Satire of Juvenal—was published in May, 1738. The plan was doubtless suggested by Pope's imitations of Horace, which had

recently appeared. Though necessarily following the lines of Juvenal's poem, and conforming to the conventional fashion of the time, both in sentiment and versification, the poem has a biographical significance. It is indeed odd to find Johnson, who afterwards thought of London as a lover of his mistress, and who despised nothing more heartily than the cant of Rousseau and the sentimentalists, adopting in this poem the ordinary denunciations of the corruption of towns, and singing the praises of an innocent country life. Doubtless, the young writer was like other young men, taking up a strain still imitative and artificial. He has a quiet smile at Savage in the life, because in his retreat to Wales, that enthusiast declared that he "could not debar himself from the happiness which was to be found in the calm of a cottage, or lose the opportunity of listening without intermission to the melody of the nightingale, which he believed was to be heard from every bramble, and which he did not fail to mention as a very important part of the happiness of a country life." In *London*, this insincere cockney adopts Savage's view. Thales, who is generally supposed to represent Savage (and this coincidence seems to confirm the opinion), is to retire "from the dungeons of the Strand," and to end a healthy life in pruning walks and twining bowers in his garden.

There every bush with nature's music rings,
There every breeze bears health upon its wings.

Johnson had not yet learnt the value of perfect sincerity even in poetry. But it must also be admitted that London, as seen by the poor drudge from a Grub Street garret, probably presented a prospect gloomy enough to make even Johnson long at times for rural solitude. The poem reflects, too, the ordinary talk of the heterogeneous band of patriots,

Jacobites, and disappointed Whigs, who were beginning to gather enough strength to threaten Walpole's long tenure of power. Many references to contemporary politics illustrate Johnson's sympathy with the inhabitants of the contemporary Cave of Adullam.

This poem, as already stated, attracted Pope's notice, who made a curious note on a scrap of paper sent with it to a friend. Johnson is described as "a man afflicted with an infirmity of the convulsive kind, that attacks him sometimes so as to make him a sad spectacle." This seems to have been the chief information obtained by Pope about the anonymous author, of whom he had said, on first reading the poem, this man will soon be *déterré*. *London* made a certain noise; it reached a second edition in a week, and attracted various patrons, among others, General Oglethorpe, celebrated by Pope, and through a long life the warm friend of Johnson. One line, however, in the poem printed in capital letters, gives the moral which was doubtless most deeply felt by the author, and which did not lose its meaning in the years to come. This mournful truth, he says,—

Is everywhere confess'd,
Slow rises worth by poverty depress'd.

Ten years later (in January 1749) appeared the *Vanity of Human Wishes*, an imitation of the Tenth Satire of Juvenal. The difference in tone shows how deeply this and similar truths had been impressed upon its author in the interval. Though still an imitation, it is as significant as the most original work could be of Johnson's settled views of life. It was written at a white heat, as indeed Johnson wrote all his best work. Its strong Stoical morality, its profound and melancholy illustrations of the old and ever new sen-

timent, *Vanitas Vanitatum*, make it perhaps the most impressive poem of the kind in the language. The lines on the scholar's fate show that the iron had entered his soul in the interval. Should the scholar succeed beyond expectation in his labours and escape melancholy and disease, yet, he says,—

Yet hope not life from grief and danger free,
Nor think the doom of man reversed on thee ;
Deign on the passing world to turn thine eyes
And pause awhile from letters, to be wise ;
There mark what ills the scholar's life assail,
Toil, envy, want, the patron and the jail ;
See nations, slowly wise and meanly just,
To buried merit raise the tardy bust.
If dreams yet flatter, once again attend.
Hear Lydiat's life and Galileo's end.

For the "patron," Johnson had originally written the "garret." The change was made after an experience of patronage to be presently described in connexion with the *Dictionary*.

For *London* Johnson received ten guineas, and for the *Vanity of Human Wishes* fifteen. Though indirectly valuable, as increasing his reputation, such work was not very profitable. The most promising career in a pecuniary sense was still to be found on the stage. Novelists were not yet the rivals of dramatists, and many authors had made enough by a successful play to float them through a year or two. Johnson had probably been determined by his knowledge of this fact to write the tragedy of *Irene*. No other excuse at least can be given for the composition of one of the heaviest and most unreadable of dramatic performances, interesting now, if interesting at all, solely as a curious example of the result of bestowing great powers upon a totally uncongenial task. Young men,

however, may be pardoned for such blunders if they are not repeated, and Johnson, though he seems to have retained a fondness for his unlucky performance, never indulged in playwriting after leaving Lichfield. The best thing connected with the play was Johnson's retort to his friend Walmsley, the Lichfield registrar. "How," asked Walmsley, "can you contrive to plunge your heroine into deeper calamity?" "Sir," said Johnson, "I can put her into the spiritual court." Even Boswell can only say for *Irene* that it is "entitled to the praise of superior excellence," and admits its entire absence of dramatic power. Garrick, who had become manager of Drury Lane, produced his friend's work in 1749. The play was carried through nine nights by Garrick's friendly zeal, so that the author had his three nights' profits. For this he received £195 17s. and for the copy he had £100. People probably attended, as they attend modern representations of legitimate drama, rather from a sense of duty, than in the hope of pleasure. The heroine originally had to speak two lines with a bowstring round her neck. The situation produced cries of murder, and she had to go off the stage alive. The objectionable passage was removed, but *Irene* was on the whole a failure, and has never, I imagine, made another appearance. When asked how he felt upon his ill-success, he replied "like the monument," and indeed he made it a principle throughout life to accept the decision of the public like a sensible man without murmurs.

Meanwhile, Johnson was already embarked upon an undertaking of a very different kind. In 1747 he had put forth a plan for an English Dictionary, addressed at the suggestion of Doddsley, to Lord Chesterfield, then Secretary of State, and the great contemporary Mæcenæus. Johnson had apparently been maturing the scheme for

some time. "I know," he says in the "plan," that "the work in which I engaged is generally considered as drudgery for the blind, as the proper toil of artless industry, a book that requires neither the light of learning nor the activity of genius, but may be successfully performed without any higher quality than that of bearing burdens with dull patience, and beating the track of the alphabet with sluggish resolution." He adds in a sub-sarcastic tone, that although princes and statesmen had once thought it honourable to patronize dictionaries, he had considered such benevolent acts to be "prodigies, recorded rather to raise wonder than expectation," and he was accordingly pleased and surprised to find that Chesterfield took an interest in his undertaking. He proceeds to lay down the general principles upon which he intends to frame his work, in order to invite timely suggestions and repress unreasonable expectations. At this time, humble as his aspirations might be, he took a view of the possibilities open to him which had to be lowered before the publication of the dictionary. He shared the illusion that a language might be "fixed" by making a catalogue of its words. In the preface which appeared with the completed work, he explains very sensibly the vanity of any such expectation. Whilst all human affairs are changing, it is, as he says, absurd to imagine that the language which repeats all human thoughts and feelings can remain unaltered.

A dictionary, as Johnson conceived it, was in fact work for a "harmless drudge," the definition of a lexicographer given in the book itself. Etymology in a scientific sense was as yet non-existent, and Johnson was not in this respect ahead of his contemporaries. To collect all the words in the language, to define their meanings as accurately as

might be, to give the obvious or whimsical guesses at Etymology suggested by previous writers, and to append a good collection of illustrative passages was the sum of his ambition. Any systematic tracing of the historical processes by which a particular language had been developed was unknown, and of course the result could not be anticipated. The work, indeed, required a keen logical faculty of definition, and wide reading of the English literature of the two preceding centuries; but it could of course give no play either for the higher literary faculties or faculties of scientific investigation. A dictionary in Johnson's sense was the highest kind of work to which a literary journeyman could be set, but it was still work for a journeyman, not for an artist. He was not adding to literature, but providing a useful implement for future men of letters.

Johnson had thus got on hand the biggest job that could be well undertaken by a good workman in his humble craft. He was to receive fifteen hundred and seventy-five pounds for the whole, and he expected to finish it in three years. The money, it is to be observed, was to satisfy not only Johnson but several copyists employed in the mechanical part of the work. It was advanced by instalments, and came to an end before the conclusion of the book. Indeed, it appeared when accounts were settled, that he had received a hundred pounds more than was due. He could, however, pay his way for the time, and would gain a reputation enough to ensure work in future. The period of extreme poverty had probably ended when Johnson got permanent employment on the *Gentleman's Magazine*. He was not elevated above the need of drudgery and economy, but he might at least be free from the dread of neglect. He could

command his market—such as it was. The necessity of steady labour was probably useful in repelling his fits of melancholy. His name was beginning to be known, and men of reputation were seeking his acquaintance. In the winter of 1749 he formed a club, which met weekly at a “famous beef-steak house” in Ivy Lane. Among its members were Hawkins, afterwards his biographer, and two friends, Bathurst a physician, and Hawkesworth an author, for the first of whom he entertained an unusually strong affection. The Club, like its more famous successor, gave Johnson an opportunity of displaying and improving his great conversational powers. He was already dreaded for his prowess in argument, his dictatorial manners and vivid flashes of wit and humour, the more effective from the habitual gloom and apparent heaviness of the discourser.

The talk of this society probably suggested topics for the *Rambler*, which appeared at this time, and caused Johnson's fame to spread further beyond the literary circles of London. The wit and humour have, indeed, left few traces upon its ponderous pages, for the *Rambler* marks the culminating period of Johnson's worst qualities of style. The pompous and involved language seems indeed to be a fit clothing for the melancholy reflections which are its chief staple, and in spite of its unmistakable power it is as heavy reading as the heavy class of lay-sermonizing to which it belongs. Such literature, however, is often strangely popular in England, and the *Rambler*, though its circulation was limited, gave to Johnson his position as a great practical moralist. He took his literary title, one may say, from the *Rambler*, as the more familiar title was derived from the *Dictionary*.

The *Rambler* was published twice a week from March

20th, 1750, to March 17th, 1752. In five numbers alone he received assistance from friends, and one of these, written by Richardson, is said to have been the only number which had a large sale. The circulation rarely exceeded 500, though ten English editions were published in the author's lifetime, besides Scotch and Irish editions. The payment, however, namely, two guineas a number, must have been welcome to Johnson, and the friendship of many distinguished men of the time was a still more valuable reward. A quaint story illustrates the hero-worship of which Johnson now became the object. Dr. Burney, afterwards an intimate friend, had introduced himself to Johnson by letter in consequence of the *Rambler*, and the plan of the *Dictionary*. The admiration was shared by a friend of Burney's, a Mr. Bawley, known—in Norfolk at least—as the "philosopher of Massingham." When Burney at last gained the honour of a personal interview, he wished to procure some "relic" of Johnson for his friend. He cut off some bristles from a hearth-broom in the doctor's chambers, and sent them in a letter to his fellow-enthusiast. Long afterwards Johnson was pleased to hear of this simple-minded homage, and not only sent a copy of the *Lives of the Poets* to the rural philosopher, but deigned to grant him a personal interview.

Dearer than any such praise was the approval of Johnson's wife. She told him that, well as she had thought of him before, she had not considered him equal to such a performance. The voice that so charmed him was soon to be silenced for ever. Mrs. Johnson died (March 17th, 1752) three days after the appearance of the last *Rambler*. The man who has passed through such a trial knows well that, whatever may be in store for him in the dark future, fate can have no heavier blow in reserve. Though John-

son once acknowledged to Boswell, when in a placid humour, that happier days had come to him in his old age than in his early life, he would probably have added that though fame and friendship and freedom from the harrowing cares of poverty might cause his life to be more equably happy, yet their rewards could represent but a faint and mocking reflection of the best moments of a happy marriage. His strong mind and tender nature reeled under the blow. Here is one pathetic little note written to the friend, Dr. Taylor, who had come to him in his distress. That which first announced the calamity, and which, said Taylor, "expressed grief in the strongest manner he had ever read," is lost.

"Dear Sir,—Let me have your company and instruction. Do not live away from me. My distress is great.

"Pray desire Mrs. Taylor to inform me what mourning I should buy for my mother and Miss Porter, and bring a note in writing with you.

"Remember me in your prayers, for vain is the help of man.

"I am, dear sir,

"SAM. JOHNSON."

We need not regret that a veil is drawn over the details of the bitter agony of his passage through the valley of the shadow of death. It is enough to put down the words which he wrote long afterwards when visibly approaching the close of all human emotions and interests:—

"This is the day on which, in 1752, dear Tetty died. I have now uttered a prayer of repentance and contrition; perhaps Tetty knows that I prayed for her. Perhaps Tetty is now praying for me. God help me. Thou, God, art merciful, hear my prayers and enable me to trust in Thee

"We were married almost seventeen years, and have now been parted thirty "

It seems half profane, even at this distance of time, to pry into grief so deep and so lasting. Johnson turned for relief to that which all sufferers know to be the only remedy for sorrow—hard labour. He set to work in his garret, an inconvenient room, "because," he said, "in that room only I never saw Mrs. Johnson." He helped his friend Hawkesworth in the *Advertiser*, a new periodical of the *Rambler* kind, but his main work was the *Dictionary*, which came out at last in 1755. Its appearance was the occasion of an explosion of wrath which marks an epoch in our literature. Johnson, as we have seen, had dedicated the Plan to Lord Chesterfield; and his language implies that they had been to some extent in personal communication. Chesterfield's fame is in curious antithesis to Johnson's. He was a man of great abilities, and seems to have deserved high credit for some parts of his statesmanship. As a Viceroy in Ireland in particular he showed qualities rare in his generation. To Johnson he was known as the nobleman who had a wide social influence as an acknowledged *arbiter elegantiarum*, and who reckoned among his claims some of that literary polish in which the earlier generation of nobles had certainly been superior to their successors. The art of life expounded in his *Letters* differs from Johnson's as much as the elegant diplomatist differs from the rough intellectual gladiator of Grub Street. Johnson spoke his mind of his rival without reserve. "I thought," he said, "that this man had been a Lord among wits; but I find he is only a wit among Lords." And of the *Letters* he said more keenly that they taught the morals of a harlot and the manners of a dancing master. Chesterfield's opinion of Johnson is indicated by the description

in his *Letters* of a "respectable Hottentot, who throws his meat anywhere but down his throat." This absurd person, said Chesterfield, "was not only uncouth in manners and warm in dispute, but behaved exactly in the same way to superiors, equals, and inferiors; and therefore, by a necessary consequence, absurdly to two of the three." *Hinc illæ lacrymæ!*

Johnson, in my opinion, was not far wrong in his judgment, though it would be a gross injustice to regard Chesterfield as nothing but a fribble. But men representing two such antithetic types were not likely to admire each other's good qualities. Whatever had been the intercourse between them, Johnson was naturally annoyed when the dignified noble published two articles in the *World*—a periodical supported by such polite personages as himself and Horace Walpole—in which the need of a dictionary was set forth, and various courtly compliments described Johnson's fitness for a dictatorship over the language. Nothing could be more prettily turned; but it meant, and Johnson took it to mean, I should like to have the dictionary dedicated to me: such a compliment would add a feather to my cap, and enable me to appear to the world as a patron of literature as well as an authority upon manners. "After making great professions," as Johnson said, "he had, for many years, taken no notice of me; but when my *Dictionary* was coming out, he fell a scribbling in the *World* about it." Johnson therefore bestowed upon the noble earl a piece of his mind in a letter which was not published till it came out in Boswell's biography.

"My Lord,—I have been lately informed by the proprietor of the *World* that two papers, in which my *Dictionary* is recommended to the public, were written by your lordship. To be so distinguished is an honour

which, being very little accustomed to favours from the great, I know not well how to receive, or in what terms to acknowledge.

“ When, upon some slight encouragement, I first visited your Lordship, I was overpowered, like the rest of mankind, by the enchantment of your address ; and could not forbear to wish that I might boast myself, *le vainqueur du vainqueur de la terre*—that I might obtain that regard for which I saw the world contending ; but I found my attendance so little encouraged that neither pride nor modesty would suffer me to continue it. When I had once addressed your Lordship in public, I had exhausted all the arts of pleasing which a retired and uncourtly scholar can possess. I had done all that I could ; and no man is well pleased to have his all neglected, be it ever so little.

“ Seven years, my lord, have now passed, since I waited in your outward rooms and was repulsed from your door ; during which time I have been pushing on my work through difficulties of which it is useless to complain, and have brought it at last to the verge of publication without one act of assistance, one word of encouragement, and one smile of favour. Such treatment I did not expect, for I never had a patron before.

“ The shepherd in *Virgil* grew at last acquainted with Love, and found him a native of the rocks.

“ Is not a patron, my Lord, one who looks with unconcern on a man struggling for life in the water, and when he has reached the ground encumbers him with help ? The notice which you have been pleased to take of my labours, had it been early, had been kind ; but it has been delayed till I am indifferent, and cannot enjoy it ; till I am solitary, and cannot impart it ; till I am known, and

do not want it. I hope it is no very cynical asperity not to confess obligations where no benefit has been received, or to be unwilling that the public should consider me as owing that to a patron which Providence has enabled me to do for myself.

“Having carried on my work thus far with so little obligation to any favourer of learning, I shall not be disappointed though I should conclude it, should less be possible, with less; for I have been long wakened from that dream of hope in which I once boasted myself with so much exultation, my Lord,

“Your Lordship’s most humble, most obedient servant,
“SAM. JOHNSON.”

The letter is one of those knock-down blows to which no answer is possible, and upon which comment is superfluous. It was, as Mr. Carlyle calls it, “the far-famed blast of doom proclaiming into the ear of Lord Chesterfield and through him, of the listening world, that patronage should be no more.”

That is all that can be said; yet perhaps it should be added that Johnson remarked that he had once received £10 from Chesterfield, though he thought the assistance too inconsiderable to be mentioned in such a letter. Hawkins also states that Chesterfield sent overtures to Johnson through two friends, one of whom, long Sir Thomas Robinson, stated that, if he were rich enough (a judicious clause) he would himself settle £500 a year upon Johnson. Johnson replied that if the first peer of the realm made such an offer, he would show him the way downstairs. Hawkins is startled at this insolence, and at Johnson’s uniform assertion that an offer of money was an insult. We cannot tell what was the history of the £10; but Johnson, in spite of Hawkins’s righteous indignation, was in fact too

proud to be a beggar, and owed to his pride his escape from the fate of Savage.

The appearance of the *Dictionary* placed Johnson in the position described soon afterwards by Smollett. He was henceforth "the great Cham of Literature"—a monarch sitting in the chair previously occupied by his namesake, Ben, by Dryden, and by Pope; but which has since that time been vacant. The world of literature has become too large for such authority. Complaints were not seldom uttered at the time. Goldsmith has urged that Boswell wished to make a monarchy of what ought to be a republic. Goldsmith, who would have been the last man to find serious fault with the dictator, thought the dictatorship objectionable. Some time indeed was still to elapse before we can say that Johnson was firmly seated on the throne; but the *Dictionary* and the *Rambler* had given him a position not altogether easy to appreciate, now that the *Dictionary* has been superseded and the *Rambler* gone out of fashion. His name was the highest at this time (1755) in the ranks of pure literature. The fame of Warburton possibly bulked larger for the moment, and one of his flatterers was comparing him to the Colossus which bestrides the petty world of contemporaries. But Warburton had subsided into episcopal repose, and literature had been for him a stepping-stone rather than an ultimate aim. Hume had written works of far more enduring influence than Johnson; but they were little read though generally abused, and scarcely belong to the purely literary history. The first volume of his *History of England* had appeared (1751), but had not succeeded. The second was just coming out. Richardson was still giving laws to his little seraglio of adoring women; Fielding had died (1754), worn out by labour and dissipation; Smollett was active in the literary

trade, but not in such a way as to increase his own dignity or that of his employment; Gray was slowly writing a few lines of exquisite verse in his retirement at Cambridge; two young Irish adventurers, Burke and Goldsmith, were just coming to London to try their fortune; Adam Smith made his first experiment as an author by reviewing the *Dictionary* in the *Edinburgh Review*; Robertson had not yet appeared as a historian; Gibbon was at Lausanne repenting of his old brief lapse into Catholicism as an act of undergraduate's folly; and Cowper, after three years of "giggling and making giggle" with Thurlow in an attorney's office, was now entered at the Temple and amusing himself at times with literature in company with such small men of letters as Colman, Bonnell Thornton, and Lloyd. It was a slack tide of literature; the generation of Pope had passed away and left no successors, and no writer of the time could be put in competition with the giant now known as "Dictionary Johnson."

When the last sheet of the *Dictionary* had been carried to the publisher, Millar, Johnson asked the messenger, "What did he say?" "Sir," said the messenger, "he said, 'Thank God I have done with him.'" "I am glad," replied Johnson, "that he thanks God for anything." Thankfulness for relief from seven years' toil seems to have been Johnson's predominant feeling: and he was not anxious for a time to take any new labours upon his shoulders. Some years passed which have left few traces either upon his personal or his literary history. He contributed a good many reviews in 1756-7 to the *Literary Magazine*, one of which, a review of Soame Jenyns, is amongst his best performances. To a weekly paper he contributed for two years, from April, 1758, to April, 1760, a set of essays called the *Idler*, on the old *Rambler* plan. He did some

small literary cobbler's work, receiving a guinea for a prospectus to a newspaper and ten pounds for correcting a volume of poetry. He had advertised in 1756 a new edition of Shakspeare which was to appear by Christmas, 1757 : but he dawdled over it so unconscionably that it did not appear for nine years ; and then only in consequence of taunts from Churchill, who accused him with too much plausibility of cheating his subscribers.

He for subscribers baits his hook ;
And takes your cash : but where's the book ?
No matter where ; wise fear, you know
Forbids the robbing of a foe ;
But what to serve our private ends
Forbids the cheating of our friends ?

In truth, his constitutional indolence seems to have gained advantages over him, when the stimulus of a heavy task was removed. In his meditations, there are many complaints of his "sluggishness" and resolutions of amendment. "A kind of strange oblivion has spread over me," he says in April, 1764, "so that I know not what has become of the last years, and perceive that incidents and intelligence pass over me without leaving any impression."

It seems, however, that he was still frequently in difficulties. Letters are preserved showing that in the beginning of 1756, Richardson became surety for him for a debt, and lent him six guineas to release him from arrest. An event which happened three years later illustrates his position and character. In January, 1759, his mother died at the age of ninety. Johnson was unable to come to Lichfield, and some deeply pathetic letters to her and her stepdaughter, who lived with her, record his emotions. Here is the last sad farewell upon the snapping of the most sacred of human ties.

"Dear Honoured Mother," he says in a letter enclosed to Lucy Porter, the step-daughter, "neither your condition nor your character make it fit for me to say much. You have been the best mother, and I believe the best woman in the world. I thank you for your indulgence to me, and beg forgiveness of all that I have done ill, and of all that I have omitted to do well. God grant you His Holy Spirit, and receive you to everlasting happiness for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen. Lord Jesus receive your spirit. I am, dear, dear mother,

"Your dutiful son,

"SAMUEL JOHNSON."

Johnson managed to raise twelve guineas, six of them borrowed from his printer, to send to his dying mother. In order to gain money for her funeral expenses and some small debts, he wrote the story of *Rasselas*. It was composed in the evenings of a single week, and sent to press as it was written. He received £100 for this, perhaps the most successful of his minor writings, and £25 for a second edition. It was widely translated and universally admired. One of the strangest of literary coincidences is the contemporary appearance of this work and Voltaire's *Candide*, to which, indeed, it bears in some respects so strong a resemblance that, but for Johnson's apparent contradiction, we would suppose that he had at least heard some description of its design. The two stories, though widely differing in tone and style, are among the most powerful expressions of the melancholy produced in strong intellects by the sadness and sorrows of the world. The literary excellence of *Candide* has secured for it a wider and more enduring popularity than has fallen to the lot of Johnson's far heavier production. But

Rasselas is a book of singular force, and bears the most characteristic impression of Johnson's peculiar temperament.

A great change was approaching in Johnson's circumstances. When George III. came to the throne, it struck some of his advisers that it would be well, as Boswell puts it, to open "a new and brighter prospect to men of literary merit." This commendable design was carried out by offering to Johnson a pension of three hundred a year. Considering that such men as Horace Walpole and his like were enjoying sinecures of more than twice as many thousands for being their father's sons, the bounty does not strike one as excessively liberal. It seems to have been really intended as some set-off against other pensions bestowed upon various hangers-on of the Scotch prime minister, Bute. Johnson was coupled with the contemptible scribbler, Shebbeare, who had lately been in the pillory for a Jacobite libel (a "he-bear" and a "she-bear," said the facetious newspapers), and when a few months afterwards a pension of £200 a year was given to the old actor, Sheridan, Johnson growled out that it was time for him to resign his own. Somebody kindly repeated the remark to Sheridan, who would never afterwards speak to Johnson.

The pension, though very welcome to Johnson, who seems to have been in real distress at the time, suggested some difficulty. Johnson had unluckily spoken of a pension in his *Dictionary* as "generally understood to mean pay given to a State hireling for treason to his country." He was assured, however, that he did not come within the definition; and that the reward was given for what he had done, not for anything that he was expected to do. After some hesitation, Johnson consented to accept the

payment thus offered without the direct suggestion of any obligation, though it was probably calculated that he would in case of need, be the more ready, as actually happened, to use his pen in defence of authority. He had not compromised his independence and might fairly laugh at angry comments. "I wish," he said afterwards, "that my pension were twice as large, that they might make twice as much noise." "I cannot now curse the House of Hanover," was his phrase on another occasion: "but I think that the pleasure of cursing the House of Hanover and drinking King James's health, are amply overbalanced by three hundred pounds a year." In truth, his Jacobitism was by this time, whatever it had once been, nothing more than a humorous crotchet, giving opportunity for the expression of Tory prejudice.

"I hope you will now purge and live cleanly like a gentleman," was Beauclerk's comment upon hearing of his friend's accession of fortune, and as Johnson is now emerging from Grub Street, it is desirable to consider what manner of man was to be presented to the wider circles that were opening to receive him.

CHAPTER III

JOHNSON AND HIS FRIENDS.

It is not till some time after Johnson had come into the enjoyment of his pension, that we first see him through the eyes of competent observers. The Johnson of our knowledge, the most familiar figure to all students of English literary history had already long passed the prime of life, and done the greatest part of his literary work. His character, in the common phrase, had been "formed" years before; as, indeed, people's characters are chiefly formed in the cradle; and, not only his character, but the habits which are learnt in the great schoolroom of the world were fixed beyond any possibility of change. The strange eccentricities which had now become a second nature, amazed the society in which he was for over twenty years a prominent figure. Unsympathetic observers, those especially to whom the Chesterfield type represented the ideal of humanity, were simply disgusted or repelled. The man, they thought, might be in his place at a Grub Street pot-house; but had no business in a lady's drawing-room. If he had been modest and retiring, they might have put up with his defects; but Johnson was not a person whose qualities, good or bad, were of a kind to be ignored. Naturally enough, the fashionable world cared little for the rugged old giant.

"The great," said Johnson, "had tried him and given him up ; they had seen enough of him ;" and his reason was pretty much to the purpose. "Great lords and great ladies don't love to have their mouths stopped," especially not, one may add, by an unwashed fist.

It is easy to blame them now. Everybody can see that a saint in beggar's rags is intrinsically better than a sinner in gold lace. But the principle is one of those which serves us for judging the dead, much more than for regulating our own conduct. Those, at any rate, may throw the first stone at the Horace Walpoles and Chesterfields, who are quite certain that they would ask a modern Johnson to their houses. The trial would be severe. Poor Mrs. Boswell complained grievously of her husband's idolatry. "I have seen many a bear led by a man," she said ; "but I never before saw a man led by a bear." The truth is, as Boswell explains, that the sage's uncouth habits, such as turning the candles' heads downwards to make them burn more brightly, and letting the wax drop upon the carpet, "could not but be disagreeable to a lady."

He had other habits still more annoying to people of delicate perceptions. A hearty despiser of all affectations, he despised especially the affectation of indifference to the pleasures of the table. "For my part," he said, "I mind my belly very studiously and very carefully, for I look upon it that he who does not mind his belly will hardly mind anything else." Avowing this principle he would innocently give himself the airs of a scientific epicure. "I, madam," he said to the terror of a lady with whom he was about to sup, "who live at a variety of good tables, am a much better judge of cookery than any person who has a very tolerable cook, but lives much at home, for his palate is gradually adapted to the taste of

his cook, whereas, madam, in trying by a wider range, I can more exquisitely judge." But his pretensions to exquisite taste are by no means borne out by independent witnesses. "He laughs," said Tom Davies, "like a rhinoceros," and he seems to have eaten like a wolf—savagely, silently, and with indiscriminating fury. He was not a pleasant object during this performance. He was totally absorbed in the business of the moment, a strong perspiration came out, and the veins of his forehead swelled. He liked coarse satisfying dishes—boiled pork and veal-pie stuffed with plums and sugar; and in regard to wine, he seems to have accepted the doctrines of the critic of a certain fluid professing to be port, who asked, "What more can you want? It is black, and it is thick, and it makes you drunk." Claret, as Johnson put it, "is the liquor for boys, and port for men; but he who aspires to be a hero must drink brandy." He could, however, refrain, though he could not be moderate, and for all the latter part of his life, from 1766, he was a total abstainer. Nor, it should be added, does he ever appear to have sought for more than exhilaration from wine. His earliest intimate friend, Hector, said that he had never but once seen him drunk.

His appetite for more innocent kinds of food was equally excessive. He would eat seven or eight peaches before breakfast, and declared that he had only once in his life had as much wall-fruit as he wished. His consumption of tea was prodigious, beyond all precedent. Hawkins quotes Bishop Burnet as having drunk sixteen large cups every morning, a feat which would entitle him to be reckoned as a rival. "A hardened and shameless tea-drinker," Johnson called himself, who "with tea amuses the evenings, with tea solaces the midnights. and with tea

welcomes the mornings." One of his teapots, preserved by a relic-hunter, contained two quarts, and he professed to have consumed five and twenty cups at a sitting. Poor Mrs. Thrale complains that he often kept her up making tea for him till four in the morning. His reluctance to go to bed was due to the fact that his nights were periods of intense misery; but the vast potations of tea can scarcely have tended to improve them.

The huge frame was clad in the raggedest of garments, until his acquaintance with the Thrales led to a partial reform. His wigs were generally burnt in front, from his shortsighted knack of reading with his head close to the candle; and at the Thrales, the butler stood ready to effect a change of wigs as he passed into the dining-room. Once or twice we have accounts of his bursting into unusual splendour. He appeared at the first representation of *Irene* in a scarlet waistcoat laced with gold; and on one of his first interviews with Goldsmith he took the trouble to array himself decently, because Goldsmith was reported to have justified slovenly habits by the precedent of the leader of his craft. Goldsmith, judging by certain famous suits, seems to have profited by the hint more than his preceptor. As a rule, Johnson's appearance, before he became a pensioner, was worthy of the proverbial manner of Grub Street. Beauclerk used to describe how he had once taken a French lady of distinction to see Johnson in his chambers. On descending the staircase they heard a noise like thunder. Johnson was pursuing them, struck by a sudden sense of the demands upon his gallantry. He brushed in between Beauclerk and the lady, and seizing her hand conducted her to her coach. A crowd of people collected to stare at the sage, dressed in rusty brown, with a pair of old shoes for slippers, a shrivelled wig on the top

of his head, and with shirtleeves and the knees of his breeches hanging loose. In those days, clergymen and physicians were only just abandoning the use of their official costume in the streets, and Johnson's slovenly habits were even more marked than they would be at present. "I have no passion for clean linen," he once remarked, and it is to be feared that he must sometimes have offended more senses than one.

In spite of his uncouth habits of dress and manners, Johnson claimed and, in a sense, with justice, to be a polite man. "I look upon myself," he said once to Boswell, "as a very polite man." He could show the stately courtesy of a sound Tory, who cordially accepts the principle of social distinction, but has far too strong a sense of self-respect to fancy that compliance with the ordinary conventions can possibly lower his own position. Rank of the spiritual kind was especially venerable to him. "I should as soon have thought of contradicting a bishop," was a phrase which marked the highest conceivable degree of deference to a man whom he respected. Nobody, again, could pay more effective compliments, when he pleased; and the many female friends who have written of him agree, that he could be singularly attractive to women. Women are, perhaps, more inclined than men to forgive external roughness in consideration of the great charm of deep tenderness in a thoroughly masculine nature. A characteristic phrase was his remark to Miss Monckton. She had declared, in opposition to one of Johnson's prejudices, that Sterne's writings were pathetic. "I am sure," she said, "they have affected me." "Why," said Johnson, smiling and rolling himself about, "that is because, dearest, you are a dunce!" When she mentioned this to him some time afterwards he replied: "Madam, if I had

thought so, I certainly should not have said it." The truth could not be more neatly put.

Boswell notes, with some surprise, that when Johnson dined with Lord Monboddo he insisted upon rising when the ladies left the table, and took occasion to observe that politeness was "fictitious benevolence," and equally useful in common intercourse. Boswell's surprise seems to indicate that Scotchmen in those days were even greater bears than Johnson. He always insisted, as Miss Reynolds tells us, upon showing ladies to their carriages through Bolt Court, though his dress was such that her readers would, she thinks, be astonished that any man in his senses should have shown himself in it abroad or even at home. Another odd indication of Johnson's regard for good manners, so far as his lights would take him, was the extreme disgust with which he often referred to a certain footman in Paris, who used his fingers in place of sugar-tongs. So far as Johnson could recognize bad manners he was polite enough, though unluckily the limitation is one of considerable importance.

Johnson's claims to politeness were sometimes, it is true, put in a rather startling form. "Every man of any education," he once said to the amazement of his hearers, "would rather be called a rascal than accused of deficiency in the graces." Gibbon, who was present, sily inquired of a lady whether among all her acquaintance she could not find *one* exception. According to Mrs. Thrale, he went even further. Dr. Barnard, he said, was the only man who had ever done justice to his good breeding; "and you may observe," he added, "that I am well-bred to a degree of needless scrupulosity." He proceeded, according to Mrs. Thrale, but the report a little taxes our faith, to claim the virtues not only of respecting ceremony, but of never

contradicting or interrupting his hearers. It is rather odd that Dr. Barnard had once a sharp altercation with Johnson, and avenged himself by a sarcastic copy of verses in which, after professing to learn perfections from different friends, he says,—

Johnson shall teach me how to please,
In varied light, each borrow'd grace;
From him I'll learn to write;
Copy his clear familiar style,
And by the roughness of his file,
Grow, like himself, polite.

Johnson, on this as on many occasions, repented of the blow as soon as it was struck, and sat down by Barnard, "literally smoothing down his arms and knees," and beseeching pardon. Barnard accepted his apologies, but went home and wrote his little copy of verses.

Johnson's shortcomings in civility were no doubt due, in part, to the narrowness of his faculties of perception. He did not know, for he could not see, that his uncouth gestures and slovenly dress were offensive; and he was not so well able to observe others as to shake off the manners contracted in Grub Street. It is hard to study a manual of etiquette late in life, and for a man of Johnson's imperfect faculties it was probably impossible. Errors of this kind were always pardonable, and are now simply ludicrous. But Johnson often shocked his companions by more indefensible conduct. He was irascible, overbearing, and, when angry, vehement beyond all propriety. He was a "tremendous companion," said Garrick's brother; and men of gentle nature, like Charles Fox, often shrank from his company, and perhaps exaggerated his brutality.

Johnson, who had long regarded conversation as the chief amusement, came in later years to regard it as almost

the chief employment of life ; and he had studied the art with the zeal of a man pursuing a favourite hobby. He had always, as he told Sir Joshua Reynolds, made it a principle to talk on all occasions as well as he could. He had thus obtained a mastery over his weapons which made him one of the most accomplished of conversational gladiators. He had one advantage which has pretty well disappeared from modern society, and the disappearance of which has been destructive to excellence of talk. A good talker, even more than a good orator, implies a good audience. Modern society is too vast and too restless to give a conversationalist a fair chance. For the formation of real proficiency in the art, friends should meet often, sit long, and be thoroughly at ease. A modern audience generally breaks up before it is well warmed through, and includes enough strangers to break the magic circle of social electricity. The clubs in which Johnson delighted were excellently adapted to foster his peculiar talent. There a man could "fold his legs and have his talk out"—a pleasure hardly to be enjoyed now. And there a set of friends meeting regularly, and meeting to talk, learnt to sharpen each other's skill in all dialectic manœuvres. Conversation may be pleasantest, as Johnson admitted, when two friends meet quietly to exchange their minds without any thought of display. But conversation considered as a game, as a bout of intellectual sword-play, has also charms which Johnson intensely appreciated. His talk was not of the encyclopædia variety, like that of some more modern celebrities ; but it was full of apposite illustrations and unrivalled in keen argument, rapid flashes of wit and humour, scornful retort and dexterous sophistry. Sometimes he would fell his adversary at a blow ; his sword, as Boswell said, would be through your body in an instant without

preliminary flourishes; and in the excitement of talking for victory, he would use any device that came to hand. "There is no arguing with Johnson," said Goldsmith, quoting a phrase from Cibber, "for if his pistol missees fire, he knocks you down with the butt-end of it."

Johnson's view of conversation is indicated by his remark about Burke. "That fellow," he said at a time of illness, "calls forth all my powers. Were I to see Burke now, it would kill me." "It is when you come close to a man in conversation," he said on another occasion, "that you discover what his real abilities are. To make a speech in an assembly is a knack. Now I honour Thurlow, sir; Thurlow is a fine fellow, he fairly puts his mind to yours."

Johnson's retorts were fair play under the conditions of the game, as it is fair play to kick an opponent's shins at football. But of course a man who had, as it were, become the acknowledged champion of the ring, and who had an irascible and thoroughly dogmatic temper, was tempted to become unduly imperious. In the company of which Savage was a distinguished member, one may guess that the conversational fervour sometimes degenerated into horse-play. Want of arguments would be supplied by personality, and the champion would avenge himself by brutality on an opponent who happened for once to be getting the best of him. Johnson, as he grew older and got into more polished society, became milder in his manners; but he had enough of the old spirit left in him to break forth at times with ungovernable fury, and astonish the well-regulated minds of respectable ladies and gentlemen.

Anecdotes illustrative of this ferocity abound, and his best friends—except, perhaps, Reynolds and Burke—had all to suffer in turn. On one occasion, when he had made a rude speech even to Reynolds, Boswell states, though with

some hesitation, his belief that Johnson actually blushed. The records of his contests in this kind fill a large space in Boswell's pages. That they did not lead to worse consequences shows his absence of rancour. He was always ready and anxious for a reconciliation, though he would not press for one if his first overtures were rejected. There was no venom in the wounds he inflicted, for there was no ill-nature ; he was rough in the heat of the struggle, and in such cases careless in distributing blows ; but he never enjoyed giving pain. None of his tiffs ripened into permanent quarrels, and he seems scarcely to have lost a friend. He is a pleasant contrast in this, as in much else, to Horace Walpole, who succeeded, in the course of a long life, in breaking with almost all his old friends. No man set a higher value upon friendship than Johnson. "A man," he said to Reynolds, "ought to keep his friendship in constant repair;" or he would find himself left alone as he grew older. "I look upon a day as lost," he said later in life, "in which I do not make a new acquaintance." Making new acquaintances did not involve dropping the old. The list of his friends is a long one, and includes, as it were, successive layers, superposed upon each other, from the earliest period of his life.

This is so marked a feature in Johnson's character, that it will be as well at this point to notice some of the friendships from which he derived the greatest part of his happiness. Two of his schoolfellows, Hector and Taylor, remained his intimates through life. Hector survived to give information to Boswell, and Taylor, then a prebendary of Westminster, read the funeral service over his old friend in the Abbey. He showed, said some of the bystanders, too little feeling. The relation between the two men was not one of special tenderness ; indeed they were so little

congenial that Boswell rather gratuitously suspected his venerable teacher of having an eye to Taylor's will. It seems fairer to regard the acquaintance as an illustration of that curious adhesiveness which made Johnson cling to less attractive persons. At any rate, he did not show the complacency of the proper will-hunter. Taylor was rector of Bosworth and squire of Ashbourne. He was a fine specimen of the squire-parson; a justice of the peace, a warm politician, and what was worse, a warm Whig. He raised gigantic bulls, bragged of selling cows for 120 guineas and more, and kept a noble butler in purple clothes and a large white wig. Johnson respected Taylor as a sensible man, but was ready to have a round with him on occasion. He snorted contempt when Taylor talked of breaking some small vessels if he took an emetic. "Bah," said the doctor, who regarded a valetudinarian as a "scoundrel," "if you have so many things that will break, you had better break your neck at once, and there's an end on't." Nay, if he did not condemn Taylor's cows, he criticized his bulldog with cruel acuteness. "No, sir, he is not well shaped; for there is not the quick transition from the thickness of the fore-part to the *tenuity*—the thin part—behind, which a bulldog ought to have." On the more serious topic of politics his Jacobite fulminations roused Taylor "to a pitch of bellowing." Johnson roared out that if the people of England were fairly polled (this was in 1777) the present king would be sent away to night, and his adherents hanged to-morrow. Johnson, however, rendered Taylor the substantial service of writing sermons for him, two volumes of which were published after they were both dead; and Taylor must have been a bold man, if it be true, as has been said, that he refused to preach a sermon written by Johnson upon Mrs. Johnson's death, on

the ground that it spoke too favourably of the character of the deceased.

Johnson paid frequent visits to Lichfield, to keep up his old friends. One of them was Lucy Porter, his wife's daughter, with whom, according to Miss Seward, he had been in love before he married her mother. He was at least tenderly attached to her through life. And, for the most part, the good people of Lichfield seem to have been proud of their fellow-townsmen, and gave him a substantial proof of their sympathy by continuing to him, on favourable terms, the lease of a house originally granted to his father. There was, indeed, one remarkable exception in Miss Seward, who belonged to a genus specially contemptible to the old doctor. She was one of the fine ladies who dabbled in poetry, and aimed at being the centre of a small literary circle at Lichfield. Her letters are amongst the most amusing illustrations of the petty affectations and squabbles characteristic of such a provincial clique. She evidently hated Johnson at the bottom of her small soul; and, indeed, though Johnson once paid her a preposterous compliment—a weakness of which this stern moralist was apt to be guilty in the company of ladies—he no doubt trod pretty roughly upon some of her pet vanities.

By far the most celebrated of Johnson's Lichfield friends was David Garrick, in regard to whom his relations were somewhat peculiar. Reynolds said that Johnson considered Garrick to be his own property, and would never allow him to be praised or blamed by any one else without contradiction. Reynolds composed a pair of imaginary dialogues to illustrate the proposition, in one of which Johnson attacks Garrick in answer to Reynolds, and in the other defends him in answer to Gibbon. The dialogues seem to be very good reproductions of the Johnsonian

manner, though perhaps the courteous Reynolds was a little too much impressed by its roughness; and they probably include many genuine remarks of Johnson's. It is remarkable that the praise is far more pointed and elaborate than the blame, which turns chiefly upon the general inferiority of an actor's position. And, in fact, this seems to have corresponded to Johnson's opinion about Garrick as gathered from Boswell.

The two men had at bottom a considerable regard for each other, founded upon old association, mutual services, and reciprocal respect for talents of very different orders. But they were so widely separated by circumstances, as well as by a radical opposition of temperament, that any close intimacy could hardly be expected. The bear and the monkey are not likely to be intimate friends. Garrick's rapid elevation in fame and fortune seems to have produced a certain degree of envy in his old schoolmaster. A grave moral philosopher has, of course, no right to look askance at the rewards which fashion lavishes upon men of lighter and less lasting merit, and which he professes to despise. Johnson, however, was troubled with a rather excessive allowance of human nature. Moreover he had the good old-fashioned contempt for players, characteristic both of the Tory and the inartistic mind. He asserted roundly that he looked upon players as no better than dancing-dogs. "But, sir, you will allow that some players are better than others?" "Yes, sir, as some dogs dance better than others." So when Goldsmith accused Garrick of grossly flattering the queen, Johnson exclaimed, "And as to meanness—how is it mean in a player, a showman, a fellow who exhibits himself for a shilling, to flatter his queen?" At another time Boswell suggested that we might respect a great player. "What! sir," exclaimed Johnson, "a

fellow who claps a hump upon his back and a lump on his leg and cries, '*I am Richard III.*'? Nay, sir, a ballad-singer is a higher man, for he does two things: he repeats and he sings; there is both recitation and music in his performance—the player only recites."

Such sentiments were not very likely to remain unknown to Garrick nor to put him at ease with Johnson, whom, indeed, he always suspected of laughing at him. They had a little tiff on account of Johnson's Edition of Shakspeare. From some misunderstanding, Johnson did not make use of Garrick's collection of old plays. Johnson, it seems, thought that Garrick should have courted him more, and perhaps sent the plays to his house; whereas Garrick, knowing that Johnson treated books with a roughness ill-suited to their constitution, thought that he had done quite enough by asking Johnson to come to his library. The revenge—if it was revenge—taken by Johnson was to say nothing of Garrick in his Preface, and to glance obliquely at his non-communication of his rarities. He seems to have thought that it would be a lowering of Shakspeare to admit that his fame owed anything to Garrick's exertions.

Boswell innocently communicated to Garrick a criticism of Johnson's upon one of his poems—

I'd smile with the simple and feed with the poor.

"Let me smile with the wise, and feed with the rich," was Johnson's tolerably harmless remark. Garrick, however, did not like it, and when Boswell tried to console him by saying that Johnson gored everybody in turn, and added, "*faenum habet in cornu.*" "Ay," said Garrick vehemently, "he has a whole mow of it."

The most unpleasant incident was when Garrick proposed rather too freely to be a member of the Club. Johnson said that the first duke in England had no right to use such language, and said, according to Mrs. Thrale, "If Garrick does apply, I'll blackball him. Surely we ought to be able to sit in a society like ours—

' Unelbowed by a gamester, pimp, or player ! ' "

Nearly ten years afterwards, however, Johnson favoured his election, and when he died, declared that the Club should have a year's widowhood. No successor to Garrick was elected during that time.

Johnson sometimes ventured to criticise Garrick's acting, but here Garrick could take his full revenge. The purblind Johnson was not, we may imagine, much of a critic in such matters. Garrick reports him to have said of an actor at Lichfield, "There is a courtly vivacity about the fellow ;" when, in fact, said Garrick, "he was the most vulgar ruffian that ever went upon boards "

In spite of such collisions of opinion and mutual criticism, Johnson seems to have spoken in the highest terms of Garrick's good qualities, and they had many pleasant meetings. Garrick takes a prominent part in two or three of the best conversations in Boswell, and seems to have put his interlocutors in specially good temper. Johnson declared him to be "the first man in the world for sprightly conversation." He said that Dryden had written much better prologues than any of Garrick's, but that Garrick had written more good prologues than Dryden. He declared that it was wonderful how little Garrick had been spoilt by all the flattery that he had received. No wonder if he was a little vain : "a man who is perpetually flattered

in every mode that can be conceived : so many bellows have blown the fuel, that one wonders he is not by this time become a cinder !” “ If all this had happened to me,” he said on another occasion, “ I should have had a couple of fellows with long poles walking before me, to knock down everybody that stood in the way. Consider, if all this had happened to Cibber and Quin, they’d have jumped over the moon. Yet Garrick speaks to us,” smiling. He admitted at the same time that Garrick had raised the profession of a player. He defended Garrick, too, against the common charge of avarice. Garrick, as he pointed out, had been brought up in a family whose study it was to make fourpence go as far as fourpence-halfpenny. Johnson remembered in early days drinking tea with Garrick when Peg Woffington made it, and made it, as Garrick grumbled, “ as red as blood.” But when Garrick became rich he became liberal. He had, so Johnson declared, given away more money than any man in England.

After Garrick’s death, Johnson took occasion to say, in the *Lives of the Poets*, that the death “ had eclipsed the gaiety of nations and diminished the public stock of harmless pleasures.” Boswell ventured to criticise the observation rather spitefully. “ Why *nations* ? Did his gaiety extend further than his own nation ? ” “ Why, sir,” replied Johnson, “ some exaggeration must be allowed. Besides, we may say *nations* if we allow the Scotch to be a nation, and to have gaiety—which they have not.” On the whole, in spite of various drawbacks, Johnson’s reported observations upon Garrick will appear to be discriminative, and yet, on the whole, strongly favourable to his character. Yet we are not quite surprised that Mrs. Garrick did not respond to a hint thrown out by Johnson, that he would be glad to write the life of his friend.

At Oxford, Johnson acquired the friendship of Dr. Adams, afterwards Master of Pembroke and author of a once well-known reply to Hume's argument upon miracles. He was an amiable man, and was proud to do the honours of the university to his old friend, when, in later years, Johnson revisited the much-loved scenes of his neglected youth. The warmth of Johnson's regard for old days is oddly illustrated by an interview recorded by Boswell with one Edwards, a fellow-student whom he met again in 1778, not having previously seen him since 1729. They had lived in London for forty years without once meeting, a fact more surprising then than now. Boswell eagerly gathered up the little scraps of college anecdote which the meeting produced, but perhaps his best find was a phrase of Edwards himself. "You are a philosopher, Dr. Johnson," he said; "I have tried, too, in my time to be a philosopher; but, I don't know how, cheerfulness was always breaking in." The phrase, as Boswell truly says, records an exquisite trait of character.

Of the friends who gathered round Johnson during his period of struggle, many had vanished before he became well known. The best loved of all seems to have been Dr. Bathurst, a physician, who, failing to obtain practice, joined the expedition to Havannah, and fell a victim to the climate (1762). Upon him Johnson pronounced a panegyric which has contributed a proverbial phrase to the language. "Dear Bathurst," he said, "was a man to my very heart's content: he hated a fool and he hated a rogue, and he hated a Whig; he was a *very good hater*." Johnson remembered Bathurst in his prayers for years after his loss, and received from him a peculiar legacy. Francis Barber had been the negro slave of Bathurst's father, who left him his liberty by will. Dr. Bathurst allowed him to enter

Johnson's service ; and Johnson sent him to school at considerable expense, and afterwards retained him in his service with little interruption till his own death. Once Barber ran away to sea, and was discharged, oddly enough, by the good offices of Wilkes, to whom Smollett applied on Johnson's behalf. Barber became an important member of Johnson's family, some of whom reproached him for his liberality to the nigger. No one ever solved the great problem as to what services were rendered by Barber to his master, whose wig was "as impenetrable by a comb as a quickset hedge," and whose clothes were never touched by the brush.

Among the other friends of this period must be reckoned his biographer, Hawkins, an attorney who was afterwards Chairman of the Middlesex Justices, and knighted on presenting an address to the King. Boswell regarded poor Sir John Hawkins with all the animosity of a rival author, and with some spice of wounded vanity. He was grievously offended, so at least says Sir John's daughter, on being described in the *Life of Johnson* as "Mr. James Boswell" without a solitary epithet such as celebrated or well-known. If that was really his feelings he had his revenge ; for no one book ever so suppressed another as Boswell's *Life* suppressed Hawkins's. In truth, Hawkins was a solemn prig, remarkable chiefly for the unusual intensity of his conviction that all virtue consists in respectability. He had a special aversion to "goodness of heart," which he regarded as another name for a quality properly called extravagance or vice. Johnson's tenacity of old acquaintance introduced him into the Club, where he made himself so disagreeable, especially, as it seems, by rudeness to Burke, that he found it expedient to invent a pretext for resignation. Johnson called him a "very un-

clubable man," and may perhaps have intended him in the quaint description: "I really believe him to be an honest man at the bottom; though, to be sure, he is rather penurious, and he is somewhat mean; and it must be owned he has some degree of brutality, and is not without a tendency to savageness that cannot well be defended."

In a list of Johnson's friends it is proper to mention Richardson and Hawkesworth. Richardson seems to have given him substantial help, and was repaid by favourable comparisons with Fielding, scarcely borne out by the verdict of posterity. "Fielding," said Johnson, "could tell the hour by looking at the clock; whilst Richardson knew how the clock was made." "There is more knowledge of the heart," he said at another time, "in one letter of Richardson's than in all *Tom Jones*." Johnson's preference of the sentimentalist to the man whose humour and strong sense were so like his own, shows how much his criticism was biassed by his prejudices, though, of course, Richardson's external decency was a recommendation to the moralist. Hawkesworth's intimacy with Johnson seems to have been chiefly in the period between the *Dictionary* and the pension. He was considered to be Johnson's best imitator; and has vanished like other imitators. His fate, if the very doubtful story believed at the time be true, was a curious one for a friend of Johnson's. He had made some sceptical remarks as to the efficacy of prayer in his preface to the *South Sea Voyages*, and was so bitterly attacked by a "Christian" in the papers, that he destroyed himself by a dose of opium.

Two younger friends, who became disciples of the sage soon after the appearance of the *Rambler*, are prominent figures in the later circle. One of these was Bennet Langton, a man of good family, fine scholarship, and very

amiable character. His exceedingly tall and slender figure was compared by Best to the stork in Raphsael's cartoon of the Miraculous Draught of Fishes. Miss Hawkins describes him sitting with one leg twisted round the other as though to occupy the smallest possible space, and playing with his gold snuff-box with a mild countenance and sweet smile. The gentle, modest creature was loved by Johnson, who could warm into unusual eloquence in singing his praises. The doctor, however, was rather fond of discussing with Boswell the faults of his friend. They seem to have chiefly consisted in a certain languor or sluggishness of temperament which allowed his affairs to get into perplexity. Once, when arguing the delicate question as to the propriety of telling a friend of his wife's unfaithfulness, Boswell, after his peculiar fashion, chose to enliven the abstract statement by the purely imaginary hypothesis of Mr and Mrs. Langton being in this position. Johnson said that it would be useless to tell Langton, because he would be too sluggish to get a divorce. Once Langton was the unconscious cause of one of Johnson's oddest performances. Langton had employed Chambers, a common friend of his and Johnson's, to draw his will. Johnson, talking to Chambers and Boswell, was suddenly struck by the absurdity of his friend's appearing in the character of testator. His companions, however, were utterly unable to see in what the joke consisted ; but Johnson laughed obstreperously and irrepressibly : he laughed till he reached the Temple Gate ; and when in Fleet Street went almost into convulsions of hilarity. Holding on by one of the posts in the street, he sent forth such peals of laughter that they seemed in the silence of the night to resound from Temple Bar to Fleet Ditch.

Not long before his death, Johnson applied to Langton

for spiritual advice. "I desired him to tell me sincerely in what he thought my life was faulty." Langton wrote upon a sheet of paper certain texts recommending Christian charity ; and explained, upon inquiry, that he was pointing at Johnson's habit of contradiction. The old doctor began by thanking him earnestly for his kindness ; but gradually waxed savage and asked Langton, "in a loud and angry tone, What is your drift, sir ?" He complained of the well-meant advice to Boswell, with a sense that he had been unjustly treated. It was a scene for a comedy, as Reynolds observed, to see a penitent get into a passion and belabour his confessor.

Through Langton, Johnson became acquainted with the friend whose manner was in the strongest contrast to his own. Topham Beauclerk was a man of fashion. He was commended to Johnson by a likeness to Charles II., from whom he was descended, being the grandson of the first Duke of St. Alban's. Beauclerk was a man of literary and acientific tastes. He inherited some of the moral laxity which Johnson chose to pardon in his ancestor. Some years after his acquaintance with Boswell he married Lady Diana Spencer, a lady who had been divorced upon his account from her husband, Lord Bolingbroke. But he took care not to obtrude his faults of life, whatever they may have been, upon the old moralist, who entertained for him a peculiar affection. He specially admired Beauclerk's skill in the use of a more polished, if less vigorous, style of conversation than his own. He envied the ease with which Beauclerk brought out his sly incisive retorts. "No man," he said, "ever was so free when he was going to say a good thing, from a look that expressed that it was coming ; or, when he had said it, from a look that expressed that it had come." When Beauclerk was dying

(in 1780), Johnson said, with a faltering voice, that he would walk to the extremity of the diameter of the earth to save him. Two little anecdotes are expressive of his tender feeling for this incongruous friend. Boswell had asked him to sup at Beauclerk's. He started, but, on the way, recollecting himself, said, "I cannot go ; but *I do not love Beauclerk the less.*" Beauclerk had put upon a portrait of Johnson the inscription,—

Ingenium ingens
Inculto latet hoc sub corpore.

Langton, who bought the portrait, had the inscription removed. "It was kind in you to take it off," said Johnson; and, after a short pause, "not unkind in him to put it on."

Early in their acquaintance, the two young men, Beau and Lanky, as Johnson called them, had sat up one night at a tavern till three in the morning. The courageous thought struck them that they would knock up the old philosopher. He came to the door of his chambers, poker in hand, with an old wig for a nightcap. On hearing their errand, the sage exclaimed, "What! is it you, you dogs? I'll have a frisk with you." And so Johnson with the two youths, his juniors by about thirty years, proceeded to make a night of it. They amazed the fruiterers in Covent Garden; they brewed a bowl of bishop in a tavern, while Johnson quoted the poet's address to Sleep,—

"Short, O short, be then thy reign,
And give us to the world again!"

They took a boat to Billingsgate, and Johnson, with Beauclerk, kept up their amusement for the following day, when Langton deserted them to go to breakfast with some

young ladies, and Johnson scolded him for leaving his friends "to go and sit with a parcel of wretched *unidea'd* girls." "I shall have my old friend to bail out of the round-house," said Garrick when he heard of this queer alliance; and he told Johnson that he would be in the *Chronicle* for his frolic. "He *durst* not do such a thing. His wife would not let him," was the moralist's retort.

Some friends, known to fame by other titles than their connexion with Johnson, had by this time gathered round them. Among them was one, whose art he was unable to appreciate, but whose fine social qualities and dignified equability of temper made him a valued and respected companion. Reynolds had settled in London at the end of 1752. Johnson met him at the house of Miss Cotterell. Reynolds had specially admired Johnson's *Life of Savage*, and, on their first meeting, happened to make a remark which delighted Johnson. The ladies were regretting the loss of a friend to whom they were under obligations. "You have, however," said Reynolds, "the comfort of being relieved from a burden of gratitude." The saying is a little too much like Rochefoucauld, and too true to be pleasant; but it was one of those keen remarks which Johnson appreciated because they prick a bubble of commonplace moralizing without demanding too literal an acceptance. He went home to sup with Reynolds and became his intimate friend. On another occasion, Johnson was offended by two ladies of rank at the same house, and by way of taking down their pride, asked Reynolds in a loud voice, "How much do you think you and I could get in a week, if we both worked as hard as we could?" "His appearance," says Sir Joshua's sister, Miss Reynolds, "might suggest the poor author: as he was not likely in that place to be a blacksmith or a porter." Poor Miss

Reynolds, who tells this story, was another attraction to Reynolds' house. She was a shy, retiring maiden lady, who vexed her famous brother by following in his steps without his talents, and was deeply hurt by his annoyance at the unintentional mockery. Johnson was through life a kind and judicious friend to her; and had attracted her on their first meeting by a significant indication of his character. He said that when going home to his lodgings at one or two in the morning, he often saw poor children asleep on thresholds and stalls—the wretched “street Arabs” of the day—and that he used to put pennies into their hands that they might buy a breakfast.

Two friends, who deserve to be placed beside Reynolds, came from Ireland to seek their fortunes in London. Edmund Burke, incomparably the greatest writer upon political philosophy in English literature, the master of a style unrivalled for richness, flexibility, and vigour, was radically opposed to Johnson on party questions, though his language upon the French Revolution, after Johnson's death, would have satisfied even the strongest prejudices of his old friend. But he had qualities which commended him even to the man who called him a “bottomless Whig,” and who generally spoke of Whigs as rascals, and maintained that the first Whig was the devil. If his intellect was wider, his heart was as warm as Johnson's, and in conversation he merited the generous applause and warm emulation of his friend. Johnson was never tired of praising the extraordinary readiness and spontaneity of Burke's conversation. “If a man,” he said, “went under a shed at the same time with Burke to avoid a shower, he would say, ‘This is an extraordinary man.’ Or if Burke went into a stable to see his horse dressed, the ostler would say, ‘We have had an extraordinary man here.’”

When Burke was first going into Parliament, Johnson said in answer to Hawkins, who wondered that such a man should get a seat, "We who know Mr. Burke, know that he will be one of the first men in the country." Speaking of certain other members of Parliament, more after the heart of Sir John Hawkins, he said that he grudged success to a man who made a figure by a knowledge of a few forms, though his mind was "as narrow as the neck of a vinegar cruet;" but that he did not grudge Burke's being the first man in the House of Commons, for he would be the first man everywhere. And Burke equally admitted Johnson's supremacy in conversation. "It is enough for me," he said to some one who regretted Johnson's monopoly of the talk on a particular occasion, "to have rung the bell for him."

The other Irish adventurer, whose career was more nearly moulded upon that of Johnson, came to London in 1756, and made Johnson's acquaintance some time afterwards (in or before 1761). Goldsmith, like Johnson, had tasted the bitterness of an usher's life, and escaped into the scarcely more tolerable regions of Grub Street. After some years of trial, he was becoming known to the booksellers as a serviceable hand, and had two works in his desk destined to lasting celebrity. His landlady (apparently 1764) one day arrested him for debt. Johnson, summoned to his assistance, sent him a guinea and speedily followed. The guinea had already been changed, and Goldsmith was consoling himself with a bottle of Madeira. Johnson corked the bottle, and a discussion of ways and means brought out the manuscript of the *Vicar of Wakefield*. Johnson looked into it, took it to a bookseller, got sixty pounds for it, and returned to Goldsmith, who paid his rent and administered a sound rating to his landlady.

The relation thus indicated is characteristic; Johnson was as a rough but helpful elder brother to poor Goldsmith, gave him advice, sympathy, and applause, and at times criticised him pretty sharply, or brought down his conversational bludgeon upon his sensitive friend. "He has nothing of the bear but his skin," was Goldsmith's comment upon his clumsy friend, and the two men appreciated each other at bottom. Some of their readers may be inclined to resent Johnson's attitude of superiority. The admirably pure and tender heart, and the exquisite intellectual refinement implied in the *Vicar* and the *Traveller*, force us to love Goldsmith in spite of superficial foibles, and when Johnson prunes or interpolates lines in the *Traveller*, we feel as though a woodman's axe was hacking at a most delicate piece of carving. The evidence of contemporary observers, however, must force impartial readers to admit that poor Goldsmith's foibles were real, however amply compensated by rare and admirable qualities. Garrick's assertion, that he "wrote like an angel but talked like poor Poll," expresses the unanimous opinion of all who had actually seen him. Undoubtedly some of the stories of his childlike vanity, his frankly expressed envy, and his general capacity for blundering, owe something to Boswell's feeling that he was a rival near the throne, and sometimes poor Goldsmith's humorous self assertion may have been taken too seriously by blunt English wits. One may doubt, for example, whether he was really jealous of a puppet tossing a pike, and unconscious of his absurdity in saying "Pshaw! I could do it better myself!" Boswell, however, was too good an observer to misrepresent at random, and he has, in fact, explained very well the true meaning of his remarks. Goldsmith was an excitable Irishman of genius.

who tumbled out whatever came uppermost, and revealed the feelings of the moment with utter want of reserve. His self-controlled companions wondered, ridiculed, misinterpreted, and made fewer hits as well as fewer misses. His anxiety to "get in and share," made him, according to Johnson, an "unsocial" companion. Goldsmith, he said, had not temper enough for the game he played. He staked too much. A man might always get a fall from his inferior in the chances of talk, and Goldsmith felt his falls too keenly. He had certainly some trials of temper in Johnson's company. "Stay, stay," said a German, stopping him in the full flow of his eloquence, "Doctor Johnson is going to say something." An Eton Master called Graham, who was supping with the two doctors, and had got to the pitch of looking at one person, and talking to another, said, "Doctor, I shall be glad to see you at Eton." "I shall be glad to wait on you," said Goldsmith. "No," replied Graham, "'tis not you I mean, Doctor Minor; 'tis Doctor Major there." Poor Goldsmith said afterwards, "Graham is a fellow to make one commit suicide."

Boswell who attributes some of Goldsmith's sayings about Johnson to envy, said with probable truth that Goldsmith had not more envy than others, but only spoke of it more freely. Johnson argued that we must be angry with a man who had so much of an odious quality that he could not keep it to himself, but let it "boil over." The feeling, at any rate, was momentary and totally free from malice, and Goldsmith's criticisms upon Johnson and his idolators seem to have been fair enough. His objection to Boswell's substituting a monarchy for a republic has already been mentioned. At another time he checked Boswell's flow of panegyric by asking, "Is he like Burke,

who winds into a subject like a serpent?" To which Boswell replied with charming irrelevance, "Johnson is the Hercules who strangled serpents in his cradle." The last of Goldsmith's hits was suggested by Johnson's shaking his sides with laughter because Goldsmith admired the skill with which the little fishes in the fable were made to talk in character. "Why, Dr. Johnson, this is not so easy as you seem to think," was the retort, "for if you were to make little fishes talk, they would talk like whales."

In spite of sundry little sparrings, Johnson fully appreciated Goldsmith's genius. Possibly his authority hastened the spread of public appreciation, as he seemed to claim, whilst repudiating Boswell's too flattering theory that it had materially raised Goldsmith's position. When Reynolds quoted the authority of Fox in favour of the *Traveller*, saying that his friends might suspect that they had been too partial, Johnson replied very truly that the *Traveller* was beyond the need of Fox's praise, and that the partiality of Goldsmith's friends had always been against him. They would hardly give him a hearing. "Goldsmith," he added, "was a man who, whatever he wrote, always did it better than any other man could do." Johnson's settled opinion in fact was that embodied in the famous epitaph with its "nihil tetigit quod non ornavit," and, though dedications are perhaps the only literary product more generally insincere than epitaphs, we may believe that Goldsmith too meant what he said in the dedication of *She Stoops to Conquer*. "It may do me some honour to inform the public that I have lived many years in intimacy with you. It may serve the interests of mankind also to inform them that the greatest wit may be found in a character, without impairing the most unaffected piety."

Though Johnson was thus rich in friendship, two connexions have still to be noticed which had an exceptional bearing upon his fame and happiness. In January, 1765, he made the acquaintance of the Thrales. Mr. Thrale was the proprietor of the brewery which afterwards became that of Barclay and Perkins. He was married in 1763 to a Miss Hester Lynch Salisbury, who has become celebrated from her friendship with Johnson.¹ She was a woman of great vivacity and independence of character. She had a sensitive and passionate, if not a very tender nature, and enough literary culture to appreciate Johnson's intellectual power, and on occasion to play a very respectable part in conversation. She had far more Latin and English scholarship than fell to the lot of most ladies of her day, and wit enough to preserve her from degenerating like some of the "blues," into that most offensive of beings—a feminine prig. Her marriage had been one of convenience, and her husband's want of sympathy, and jealousy of any interference in business matters, forced her, she says, to take to literature as her sole resource. "No wonder," she adds, "if I loved my books and children." It is, perhaps, more to be wondered at that her children seem to have had a rather subordinate place in her affections. The marriage, however, though not of the happiest, was perfectly decorous. Mrs. Thrale discharged her domestic duties irreproachably, even when she seems to have had some real cause of complaint. To the world she eclipsed her husband, a solid respectable man, whose mind, according to Johnson, struck the hours very regularly, though it did not mark the minutes.

¹ Mrs. Thrale was born in 1740 or 1741, probably the latter. Thrale was born in 1724.

The Thrales were introduced to Johnson by their common friend, Arthur Murphy, an actor and dramatist, who afterwards became the editor of Johnson's works. One day, when calling upon Johnson, they found him in such a fit of despair that Thrale tried to stop his mouth by placing his hand before it. The pair then joined in begging Johnson to leave his solitary abode, and come to them at their country-house at Streatham. He complied, and for the next sixteen years a room was set apart for him, both at Streatham and in their house in Southwark. He passed a large part of his time with them, and derived from the intimacy most of the comfort of his later years. He treated Mrs. Thrale with a kind of paternal gallantry, her age at the time of their acquaintance being about twenty-four, and his fifty-five. He generally called her by the playful name of "my mistress," addressed little poems to her, gave her solid advice, and gradually came to confide to her his miseries and ailments with rather surprising frankness. She flattered and amused him, and soothed his sufferings and did something towards humanizing his rugged exterior. There was one little grievance between them which requires notice. Johnson's pet virtue in private life was a rigid regard for truth. He spoke, it was said of him, as if he was always on oath. He would not, for example, allow his servant to use the phrase "not at home," and even in the heat of conversation resisted the temptation to give point to an anecdote. The lively Mrs. Thrale rather fretted against the restraint, and Johnson admonished her in vain. He complained to Boswell that she was willing to have that said of her, which the best of mankind had died rather than have said of them. Boswell, the faithful imitator of his master in this respect, delighted in taking up the parable. "Now, madam, give

me leave to catch you in the fact," he said on one occasion; "it was not an old woman, but an old man whom I mentioned, as having told me this," and he recounts his check to the "lively lady" with intense complacency. As may be imagined, Boswell and Mrs. Thrale did not love each other, in spite of the well-meant efforts of the sage to bring about a friendly feeling between his disciples.

It is time to close this list of friends with the inimitable Boswell. James Boswell, born in 1740, was the eldest son of a Whig laird and lord of sessions. He had acquired some English friends at the Scotch universities, among whom must be mentioned Mr. Temple, an English clergyman. Boswell's correspondence with Temple, discovered years after his death by a singular chance, and published in 1857, is, after the Life of Johnson, one of the most curious exhibitions of character in the language. Boswell was intended for the Scotch bar, and studied civil law at Utrecht in the winter of 1762. It was in the following summer that he made Johnson's acquaintance.

Perhaps the fundamental quality in Boswell's character was his intense capacity for enjoyment. He was, as Mr. Carlyle puts it, "gluttonously fond of whatever would yield him a little solacement, were it only of a stomachic character." His love of good living and good drink would have made him a hearty admirer of his countryman, Burns, had Burns been famous in Boswell's youth. Nobody could have joined with more thorough abandonment in the chorus to the poet's liveliest songs in praise of love and wine. He would have made an excellent fourth when "Willie brewed a peck of maut, and Rab and Allan can to pree," and the drinking contest for the Whistle commemorated in another lyric would have excited his keenest interest. He was always delighted when he could get

Johnson to discuss the ethics and statistics of drinking. "I am myself," he says, "a lover of wine, and therefore curious to hear whatever is remarkable concerning drinking." The remark is *à propos* to a story of Dr. Campbell drinking thirteen bottles of port at a sitting. Lest this should seem incredible, he quotes Johnson's dictum. "Sir, if a man drinks very slowly and lets one glass evaporate before he takes another, I know not how long he may drink." Boswell's faculty for making love was as great as his power of drinking. His letters to Temple record with amusing frankness the vicissitudes of some of his courtships and the versatility of his passions.

Boswell's tastes, however, were by no means limited to sensual or frivolous enjoyments. His appreciation of the bottle was combined with an equally hearty sensibility to more intellectual pleasures. He had not a spark of philosophic or poetic power, but within the ordinary range of such topics as can be discussed at a dinner-party, he had an abundant share of liveliness and intelligence. His palate was as keen for good talk as for good wine. He was an admirable recipient, if not an originator, of shrewd or humorous remarks upon life and manners. What in regard to sensual enjoyment was mere gluttony, appeared in higher matters as an insatiable curiosity. At times this faculty became intolerable to his neighbours. "I will not be baited with what and why," said poor Johnson, one day in desperation. "Why is a cow's tail long? Why is a fox's tail bushy?" "Sir," said Johnson on another occasion, when Boswell was cross-examining a third person about him in his presence. "You have but two subjects, yourself and me. I am sick of both." Boswell, however, was not to be repelled by such a retort as this, or even by ruder rebuffs. Once when dis-

cussing the means of getting a friend to leave London, Johnson said in revenge for a previous offence. "Nay, sir, we'll send you to him. If your presence doesn't drive a man out of his house, nothing will." Boswell was "horribly shocked," but he still stuck to his victim like a leech, and pried into the minutest details of his life and manners. He observed with conscientious accuracy that though Johnson abstained from milk one fast-day, he did not reject it when put in his cup. He notes the whistlings and puffings, the trick of saying "too-too-too" of his idol: and it was a proud day when he won a bet by venturing to ask Johnson what he did with certain scraped bits of orange-peel. His curiosity was not satisfied on this occasion; but it would have made him the prince of interviewers in these days. Nothing delighted him so much as rubbing shoulders with any famous or notorious person. He scraped acquaintance with Voltaire, Wesley, Rousseau, and Paoli, as well as with Mrs. Rudd, a forgotten heroine of the *Newgate Calendar*. He was as eager to talk to Hume the sceptic, or Wilkes the demagogue, as to the orthodox Tory, Johnson; and, if repelled, it was from no deficiency in daring. In 1767, he took advantage of his travels in Corsica to introduce himself to Lord Chatham, then Prime Minister. The letter modestly ends by asking, "*Could your lordship find time to honour me now and then with a letter?*" I have been told how favourably your lordship has spoken of me. To correspond with a Paoli and with a Chatham is enough to keep a young man ever ardent in the pursuit of virtuous fame." No other young man of the day, we may be sure, would have dared to make such a proposal to the majestic orator.

His absurd vanity, and the greedy craving for notoriety

at any cost, would have made Boswell the most offensive of mortals, had not his unfeigned good-humour disarmed enmity. Nobody could help laughing, or be inclined to take offence at his harmless absurdities. Burke said of him that he had so much good-humour naturally, that it was scarcely a virtue. His vanity, in fact, did not generate affectation. Most vain men are vain of qualities which they do not really possess, or possess in a lower degree than they fancy. They are always acting a part, and become touchy from a half-conscious sense of the imposture. But Boswell seems to have had few such illusions. He thoroughly and unfeignedly enjoyed his own peculiarities, and thought his real self much too charming an object to be in need of any disguise. No man, therefore, was ever less embarrassed by any regard for his own dignity. He was as ready to join in a laugh at himself as in a laugh at his neighbours. He reveals his own absurdities to the world at large as frankly as Pepys confided them to a journal in cypher. He tells us how drunk he got one night in Skye, and how he cured his headache with brandy next morning; and what an intolerable fool he made of himself at an evening party in London after a dinner with the Duke of Montrose, and how Johnson in vain did his best to keep him quiet. His motive for the concession is partly the wish to illustrate Johnson's indulgence, and, in the last case, to introduce a copy of apologetic verses to the lady whose guest he had been. He reveals other weaknesses with equal frankness. One day, he says, "I owned to Johnson that I was occasionally troubled with a fit of narrowness." "Why, sir," said he, "so am I. *But I do not tell it.*" Boswell enjoys the joke far too heartily to act upon the advice.

There is nothing, however, which Boswell seems to have

enjoyed more heartily than his own good impulses. He looks upon his virtuous resolution with a sort of æsthetic satisfaction, and with the glow of a virtuous man contemplating a promising penitent. Whilst suffering severely from the consequences of imprudent conduct, he gets a letter of virtuous advice from his friend Temple. He instantly sees himself reformed for the rest of his days. "My warm imagination," he says, "looks forward with great complacency on the sobriety, the healthfulness, and worth of my future life." "Every instance of our doing those things which we ought not to have done, and leaving undone those things which we ought to have done, is attended," as he elsewhere sagely observes, "with more or less of what is truly remorse;" but he seems rather to have enjoyed even the remorse. It is needless to say that the complacency was its own reward, and that the resolution vanished like other more eccentric impulses. Music, he once told Johnson, affected him intensely, producing in his mind "alternate sensations of pathetic dejection, so that I was ready to shed tears, and of daring resolution so that I was inclined to rush into the thickest of the [purely hypothetical] battle." "Sir," replied Johnson, "I should never hear it, if it made me such a fool." Elsewhere he expresses a wish to "fly to the woods," or retire into a desert, a disposition which Johnson checked by one of his habitual gibes at the quantity of easily accessible desert in Scotland. Boswell is equally frank in describing himself in situations more provocative of contempt than even drunkenness in a drawing-room. He tells us how dreadfully frightened he was by a storm at sea in the Hebrides, and how one of his companions, "with a happy readiness," made him lay hold of a rope fastened to the masthead, and told him to pull it when he was

ordered. Boswell was thus kept quiet in mind and harmless in body.

This extreme simplicity of character makes poor Boswell loveable in his way. If he sought notoriety, he did not so far mistake his powers as to set up for independent notoriety.* He was content to shine in reflected light: and the allusions with which he is charged seem to have been unconscious imitations of his great idol. Miss Burney traced some likeness even in his dress. In the later part of the *Life* we meet phrases in which Boswell is evidently aping the true Johnsonian style. So, for example, when somebody distinguishes between "moral" and "physical necessity;" Boswell exclaims, "Alas, sir, they come both to the same thing. You may be as hard bound by chains when covered by leather, as when the iron appears." But he specially emulates the profound melancholy of his hero. He seems to have taken pride in his sufferings from hypochondria; though, in truth, his melancholy diverges from Johnson's by as great a difference as that which divides any two varieties in Jaques's classification. Boswell's was the melancholy of a man who spends too much, drinks too much, falls in love too often, and is forced to live in the country in dependence upon a stern old parent, when he is longing for a jovial life in London taverns. Still he was exasperably vexed when Johnson refused to believe in the reality of his complaints, and showed scant sympathy to his noisy would-be fellow-sufferer. Some of Boswell's freaks

* The story is often told how Boswell appeared at the Stratford Jubilee with "Corsica Boswell" in large letters on his hat. The account given apparently by himself is sufficiently amusing, but the statement is not quite fair. Boswell not unnaturally appeared at a masquerade in the dress of a Corsican chief, and the inscription on his hat seems to have been "Viva la Liberté."

were, in fact, very trying. Once he gave up writing letters for a long time, to see whether Johnson would be induced to write first. Johnson became anxious, though he half-guessed the truth, and in reference to Boswell's confession gave his disciple a piece of his mind. "Remember that all tricks are either knavish or childish, and that it is as foolish to make experiments upon the constancy of a friend as upon the chastity of a wife."

In other ways Boswell was more successful in aping his friend's peculiarities. When in company with Johnson, he became delightfully pious. "My dear sir," he exclaimed once with unrestrained fervour, "I would fain be a good man, and I am very good now. I fear God and honour the king; I wish to do no ill and to be benevolent to all mankind." Boswell hopes, "for the felicity of human nature," that many experience this mood; though Johnson judiciously suggested that he should not trust too much to impressions. In some matters Boswell showed a touch of independence by outvying the Johnsonian prejudices. He was a warm admirer of feudal principles, and especially held to the propriety of entailing property upon heirs male. Johnson had great difficulty in persuading him to yield to his father's wishes, in a settlement of the estate which contravened this theory. But Boswell takes care to declare that his opinion was not shaken. "Yet let me not be thought," he adds, "harsh or unkind to daughters; for my notion is that they should be treated with great affection and tenderness, and always participate of the prosperity of the family." His estimate of female rights is indicated in another phrase. When Mrs. Knowles, the Quaker, expressed a hope that the sexes would be equal in another world, Boswell replied, "That is too ambitious, madam. We might as well desire to be equal with the angels."

Boswell, again, differed from Johnson—who, in spite of his love of authority, had a righteous hatred for all recognized tyranny—by advocating the slave-trade. To abolish that trade would, he says, be robbery of the masters and cruelty to the African savages. Nay, he declares, to abolish it would be

To shut the gates of mercy on mankind !

Boswell was, according to Johnson, "the best travelling companion in the world." In fact, for such purposes, un-failing good-humour and readiness to make talk at all hazards are high recommendations. "If, sir, you were shut up in a castle and a new-born baby with you, what would you do?" is one of his questions to Johnson,—*à propos* of nothing. That is exquisitely ludicrous, no doubt; but a man capable of preferring such a remark to silence helps at any rate to keep the ball rolling. A more objectionable trick was his habit not only of asking preposterous or indiscreet questions, but of setting people by the ears out of sheer curiosity. The appearance of so queer a satellite excited astonishment among Johnson's friends. "Who is this Scotch cur at Johnson's heels?" asked some one. "He is not a cur," replied Goldsmith; "he is only a bur. Tom Davies flung him at Johnson in sport, and he has the faculty of sticking." The bur stuck till the end of Johnson's life. Boswell visited London whenever he could, and soon began taking careful notes of Johnson's talk. His appearance, when engaged in this task long afterwards, is described by Miss Burney. Boswell, she says, concentrated his whole attention upon his idol, not even answering questions from others. When Johnson spoke, his eyes goggled with eagerness; he leant his ear almost on the Doctor's shoulder; his mouth dropped open

to catch every syllable; and he seemed to listen even to Johnson's breathings as though they had some mystical significance. He took every opportunity of edging himself close to Johnson's side even at meal-times, and was sometimes ordered imperiously back to his place like a faithful but over-obtrusive spaniel.

It is hardly surprising that Johnson should have been touched by the fidelity of this queer follower. Boswell, modestly enough, attributes Johnson's easy welcome to his interest in all manifestations of the human mind, and his pleasure in an undisguised display of its workings. The last pleasure was certainly to be obtained in Boswell's society. But in fact Boswell, though his qualities were too much those of the ordinary "good fellow," was not without virtues, and still less without remarkable talents. He was, to all appearance, a man of really generous sympathies, and capable of appreciating proofs of a warm heart and a vigorous understanding. Foolish, vain, and absurd in every way, he was yet a far kinder and more genuine man than many who laughed at him. His singular gifts as an observer could only escape notice from a careless or inexperienced reader. Boswell has a little of the true Shaksperian secret. He lets his characters show themselves without obtruding unnecessary comment. He never misses the point of a story, though he does not ostentatiously call our attention to it. He gives just what is wanted to indicate character, or to explain the full meaning of a repartee. It is not till we compare his reports with those of less skilful hearers, that we can appreciate the skill with which the essence of a conversation is extracted, and the whole scene indicated by a few telling touches. We are tempted to fancy that we have heard the very thing, and rashly infer that Boswell was simply the mechanical trans-

One special merit implies something like genius. Macaulay has given to the usual complaint which distorts the vision of most biographers the name of *lues Boswelliana*. It is true that Boswell's adoration of his hero is a typical example of the feeling. But that which distinguishes Boswell, and renders the phrase unjust, is that in him adoration never hindered accuracy of portraiture. "I will not make my tiger a cat to please anybody," was his answer to well-meaning entreaties of Hannah More to soften his accounts of Johnson's asperities. He saw instinctively that a man who is worth anything loses far more than he gains by such posthumous flattery. The whole picture is toned down, and the lights are depressed as well as the shadows. The truth is that it is unscientific to consider a man as a bundle of separate good and bad qualities, of which one half may be concealed without injury to the rest. Johnson's fits of bad temper, like Goldsmith's blundering, must be unsparingly revealed by a biographer, because they are in fact expressions of the whole character. It is necessary to take them into account in order really to understand either the merits or the shortcomings. When they are softened or omitted, the whole story becomes an enigma, and we are often tempted to substitute some less creditable explanation of errors for the true one. We should not do justice to Johnson's intense tenderness, if we did not see how often it was masked by an irritability pardonable in itself, and not affecting the deeper springs of action. To bring out the beauty of a character by means of its external oddities is the triumph of a kindly humourist; and Boswell would have acted as absurdly in suppressing Johnson's weaknesses, as Sterne would have done had he made Uncle Toby a perfectly sound and rational person. But to see this required an insight so rare that it is wanting in nearly

all the biographers who have followed Boswell's steps, and is the most conclusive proof that Boswell was a man of a higher intellectual capacity than has been generally admitted.

CHAPTER IV.

JOHNSON AS A LITERARY DICTATOR.

WE have now reached the point at which Johnson's life becomes distinctly visible through the eyes of a competent observer. The last twenty years are those which are really familiar to us; and little remains but to give some brief selection of Boswell's anecdotes. The task, however, is a difficult one. It is easy enough to make a selection of the gems of Boswell's narrative; but it is also inevitable that, taken from their setting, they should lose the greatest part of their brilliance. We lose all the quaint semi-conscious touches of character which make the original so fascinating, and Boswell's absurdities become less amusing when we are able to forget for an instant that the perpetrator is also the narrator. The effort, however, must be made; and it will be best to premise a brief statement of the external conditions of the life.

From the time of the pension until his death, Johnson was elevated above the fear of poverty. He had a pleasant refuge at the 'Thrales', where much of his time was spent; and many friends gathered round him and regarded his utterances with even excessive admiration. He had still frequent periods of profound depression. His diaries reveal an inner life tormented by gloomy forebodings, by remorse for past indolence and futile resolutions of amendment; but he could always escape from himself to a society

of friends and admirers. His abandonment of wine seems to have improved his health and diminished the intensity of his melancholy fits. His literary activity, however, nearly ceased. He wrote a few political pamphlets in defence of Government, and after a long period of indolence managed to complete his last conspicuous work—the *Lives of the Poets*, which was published in 1779 and 1781. One other book of some interest appeared in 1775. It was an account of the journey made with Boswell to the Hebrides in 1773. This journey was in fact the chief interruption to the even tenour of his life. He made a tour to Wales with the Thrales in 1774; and spent a month with them in Paris in 1775. For the rest of the period he lived chiefly in London or at Streatham, making occasional trips to Lichfield and Oxford, or paying visits to Taylor, Langton, and one or two other friends. It was, however, in the London which he loved so ardently ("a man," he said once, "who is tired of London is tired of life"), that he was chiefly conspicuous. There he talked and drank tea illimitably at his friends' houses, or argued and laid down the law to his disciples collected in a tavern instead of Academic groves. Especially he was in all his glory at the Club, which began its meetings in February, 1764, and was afterwards known as the Literary Club. This Club was founded by Sir Joshua Reynolds, "our Romulus," as Johnson called him. The original members were Reynolds, Johnson, Burke, Nugent, Beauchamp, Langton, Goldsmith, Chamier, and Hawkins. They met weekly at the Turk's Head, in Gerard Street, Soho, at seven o'clock, and the talk generally continued till a late hour. The Club was afterwards increased in numbers, and the weekly supper changed to a fortnightly dinner. It continued to thrive, and election to it came to be as great an honour in certain

circles as election to a membership of Parliament. Among the members elected in Johnson's lifetime were Percy of the *Reliques*, Garrick, Sir W. Jones, Boswell, Fox, Steevens, Gibbon, Adam Smith, the Warton, Sheridan, Dunning, Sir Joseph Banks, Windham, Lord Stowell, Malone, and Dr. Burney. What was best in the conversation at the time was doubtless to be found at its meetings.

Johnson's habitual mode of life is described by Dr. Maxwell, one of Boswell's friends, who made his acquaintance in 1754. Maxwell generally called upon him about twelve, and found him in bed or declaiming over his tea. A levée, chiefly of literary men, surrounded him; and he seemed to be regarded as a kind of oracle to whom every one might resort for advice or instruction. After talking all the morning, he dined at a tavern, staying late and then going to some friend's house for tea, over which he again loitered for a long time. Maxwell is puzzled to know when he could have read or written. The answer seems to be pretty obvious; namely, that after the publication of the *Dictionary* he wrote very little, and that, when he did write, it was generally in a brief spasm of feverish energy. One may understand that Johnson should have frequently reproached himself for his indolence; though he seems to have occasionally comforted himself by thinking that he could do good by talking as well as by writing. He said that a man should have a part of his life to himself; and compared himself to a physician retired to a small town from practice in a great city. Boswell, in spite of this, said that he still wondered that Johnson had not more pleasure in writing than in not writing. "Sir," replied the oracle, "you *may* wonder."

I will now endeavour, with Boswell's guidance, to describe a few of the characteristic scenes which can be fully

enjoyed in his pages alone. The first must be the introduction of Boswell to the sage. Boswell had come to London eager for the acquaintance of literary magnates. He already knew Goldsmith, who had inflamed his desire for an introduction to Johnson. Once when Boswell spoke of Levett, one of Johnson's dependents, Goldsmith had said, "he is poor and honest, which is recommendation enough to Johnson." Another time, when Boswell had wondered at Johnson's kindness to a man of bad character, Goldsmith had replied, "He is now become miserable, and that insures the protection of Johnson." Boswell had hoped for an introduction through the elder Sheridan; but Sheridan never forgot the contemptuous phrase in which Johnson had referred to his fellow-pensioner. Possibly Sheridan had heard of one other Johnsonian remark. "Why, sir," he had said, "Sherry is dull, naturally dull; but it must have taken him a great deal of pains to become what we now see him. Such an excess of stupidity, sir, is not in Nature." At another time he said, "Sheridan cannot bear me; I bring his declamation to a point." "What influence can Mr. Sheridan have upon the language of this great country by his narrow exertions? Sir, it is burning a farthing candle at Dover to show light at Calais." Boswell, however, was acquainted with Davies, an actor turned bookseller, now chiefly remembered by a line in Churchill's *Rosciad* which is said to have driven him from the stage—

He mouths a sentence as curs mouth a bone.

Boswell was drinking tea with Davies and his wife in their back parlour when Johnson came into the shop. Davies, seeing him through the glass-door, announced his approach to Boswell in the spirit of Horatio addressing Hamlet:

"Look, my Lord, it comes!" Davies introduced the young Scotchman, who remembered Johnson's proverbial prejudices. "Don't tell him where I come from!" cried Boswell. "From Scotland," said Davies roguishly. "Mr. Johnson," said Boswell, "I do indeed come from Scotland; but I cannot help it!" "That, sir," was the first of Johnson's many retorts to his worshipper, "is what a great many of your countrymen cannot help."

Poor Boswell was stunned; but he recovered when Johnson observed to Davies, "What do you think of Garrick? He has refused me an order for the play for Miss Williams because he knows the house will be full, and that an order would be worth three shillings." "O, sir," intruded the unlucky Boswell, "I cannot think Mr. Garrick would grudge such a trifle to you." "Sir," replied Johnson sternly, "I have known David Garrick longer than you have done, and I know no right you have to talk to me on the subject." The second blow might have crushed a less intrepid curiosity. Boswell, though silenced, gradually recovered sufficiently to listen, and afterwards to note down parts of the conversation. As the interview went on, he even ventured to make a remark or two, which were very civilly received; Davies consoled him at his departure by assuring him that the great man liked him very well. "I cannot conceive a more humiliating position," said Beauclerk on another occasion, "than to be clapped on the back by Tom Davies." For the present, however, even Tom Davies was a welcome encourager to one who, for the rest, was not easily rebuffed. A few days afterwards Boswell ventured a call, was kindly received and detained for some time by "the giant in his den." He was still a little afraid of the said giant, who had shortly before administered a vigorous retort to his

countryman Blair. Blair had asked Johnson whether he thought that any man of a modern age could have written *Ossian*. "Yes, sir," replied Johnson, "many men, many women, and many children." Boswell, however, got on very well, and before long had the high honour of drinking a bottle of port with Johnson at the Mitre, and receiving, after a little autobiographical sketch, the emphatic approval, "Give me your hand, I have taken a liking to you."

In a very short time Boswell was on sufficiently easy terms with Johnson, not merely to frequent his levées but to ask him to dinner at the Mitre. He gathered up, though without the skill of his later performances, some fragments of the conversational feast. The great man aimed another blow or two at Scotch prejudices. To an unlucky compatriot of Boswell's, who claimed for his country a great many "noble wild prospects," Johnson replied, "I believe, sir, you have a great many, Norway, too, has noble wild prospects; and Lapland is remarkable for prodigious noble wild prospects. But, sir, let me tell you the noblest prospect which a Scotchman ever sees, is the high road that leads him to England." Though Boswell makes a slight remonstrance about the "rude grandeur of Nature" as seen in "Caledonia," he sympathized in this with his teacher. Johnson said afterwards, that he never knew any one with "such a gust for London." Before long he was trying Boswell's tastes by asking him in Greenwich Park, "Is not this very fine?" "Yes, sir," replied the promising disciple, "but not equal to Fleet Street." "You are right, sir," said the sage; and Boswell illustrates his dictum by the authority of a "very fashionable baronet," and, moreover, a baronet from Rydal, who declared that the fragrance of a May evening in the country might be very well, but

that he preferred the smell of a flambeau at the playhouse. In more serious moods Johnson delighted his new disciple by discussions upon theological, social, and literary topics. He argued with an unfortunate friend of Boswell's, whose mind, it appears, had been poisoned by Hume, and who was, moreover, rash enough to undertake the defence of principles of political equality. Johnson's view of all propagators of new opinions was tolerably simple. "Hume, and other sceptical innovators," he said, "are vain men, and will gratify themselves at any expense. Truth will not afford sufficient food to their vanity; so they have betaken themselves to error. Truth, sir, is a cow which will yield such people no more milk, and so they are gone to milk the bull." On another occasion poor Boswell, not yet acquainted with the master's prejudices, quoted with hearty laughter a "very strange" story which Hume had told him of Johnson. According to Hume, Johnson had said that he would stand before a battery of cannon to restore Convocation to its full powers. "And would I not, sir?" thundered out the sage with flashing eyes and threatening gestures. Boswell judiciously bowed to the storm, and diverted Johnson's attention. Another manifestation of orthodox prejudice was less terrible. Boswell told Johnson that he had heard a Quaker woman preach. "A woman's preaching," said Johnson, "is like a dog's walking on his hind legs. It is not done well; but you are surprised to find it done at all."

So friendly had the pair become, that when Boswell left England to continue his studies at Utrecht, Johnson accompanied him in the stage-coach to Harwich, amusing him on the way by his frankness of address to fellow-passengers, and by the voracity of his appetite. He gave him some excellent advice, remarking of a moth which flut-

tered into a candle, "that creature was its own tormentor, and I believe its name was Boswell." He refuted Berkeley by striking his foot with mighty force against a large stone, till he rebounded from it. As the ship put out to sea Boswell watched him from the deck, whilst he remained "rolling his majestic frame in his usual manner." And so the friendship was cemented, though Boswell disappeared for a time from the scene, travelled on the Continent, and visited Paoli in Corsica. A friendly letter or two kept up the connexion till Boswell returned in 1766, with his head full of Corsica and a projected book of travels.

In the next year, 1767, occurred an incident upon which Boswell dwells with extreme complacency. Johnson was in the habit of sometimes reading in the King's Library, and it came into the head of his majesty that he should like to see the uncouth monster upon whom he had bestowed a pension. In spite of his semi-humorous Jacobinism, there was probably not a more loyal subject in his majesty's dominions. Loyalty is a word too often used to designate a sentiment worthy only of valets, advertising tradesmen, and writers of claptrap articles. But it deserves all respect when it reposes, as in Johnson's case, upon a profound conviction of the value of political subordination, and an acceptance of the king as the authorized representative of a great principle. There was no touch of servility in Johnson's respect for his sovereign, a respect fully reconcilable with a sense of his own personal dignity. Johnson spoke of his interview with an unfeigned satisfaction, which it would be difficult in these days to preserve from the taint of anobbishness. He described it frequently to his friends, and Boswell with pious care ascertained the details from Johnson himself, and from various secondary sources. He contrived afterwards to get his minute

submitted to the King himself, who graciously authorized its publication. When he was preparing his biography, he published this account with the letter to Chesterfield in a small pamphlet sold at a prohibitory price, in order to secure the copyright.

"I find," said Johnson afterwards, "that it does a man good to be talked to by his sovereign. In the first place a man cannot be in a passion." What other advantages he perceived must be unknown, for here the oracle was interrupted. But whatever the advantages, it could hardly be reckoned amongst them, that there would be room for the hearty cut and thrust retorts which enlivened his ordinary talk. To us accordingly the conversation is chiefly interesting as illustrating what Johnson meant by his politeness. He found that the King wanted him to talk, and he talked accordingly. He spoke in a "firm manly manner, with a sonorous voice," and not in the subdued tone customary at formal receptions. He dilated upon various literary topics, on the libraries of Oxford and Cambridge, on some contemporary controversies, on the quack Dr. Hill, and upon the reviews of the day. All that is worth repeating is a complimentary passage which shows Johnson's possession of that courtesy which rests upon sense and self-respect. The King asked whether he was writing anything, and Johnson excused himself by saying that he had told the world what he knew for the present, and had "done his part as a writer." "I should have thought so too," said the King, "if you had not written so well." "No man," said Johnson, "could have paid a higher compliment; and it was fit for a King to pay it was decisive." When asked if he had replied, he said, "No, sir. When the King had said it, it was to be. It was not for me to bandy civilities with my sovereign."

Johnson was not the less delighted. "Sir," he said to the librarian, "they may talk of the King as they will, but he is the finest gentleman I have ever seen." And he afterwards compared his manners to those of Louis XIV., and his favourite, Charles II. Goldsmith, says Boswell, was silent during the narrative, because (so his kind friend supposed) he was jealous of the honour paid to the dictator. But his natural simplicity prevailed. He ran to Johnson, and exclaimed in 'a kind of flutter,' "Well, you acquitted yourself in this conversation better than I should have done, for I should have bowed and stammered through the whole of it."

The years 1768 and 1769 were a period of great excitement for Boswell. He was carrying on various love affairs, which ended with his marriage in the end of 1769. He was publishing his book upon Corsica and paying homage to Paoli, who arrived in England in the autumn of the same year. The book appeared in the beginning of 1768, and he begs his friend Temple to report all that is said about it, but with the restriction that he is to conceal *all censure*. He particularly wanted Gray's opinion, as Gray was a friend of Temple's. Gray's opinion, not conveyed to Boswell, was expressed by his calling it "a dialogue between a green goose and a hero." Boswell, who was cultivating the society of various eminent people, exclaims triumphantly in a letter to Temple (April 26, 1768), "I am really the great man now." Johnson and Hume had called upon him on the same day, and Garrick, Franklin, and Oglethorpe also partook of his "admirable dinners and good claret." "This," he says, with the sense that he deserved his honours, "is enjoying the fruit of my labours, and appearing like the friend of Paoli." Johnson in vain expressed a wish that he would "empty his head of

Corsica, which had filled it too long." "Empty my head of Corsica! Empty it of honour, empty it of friendship, empty it of piety!" exclaims the ardent youth. The next year accordingly saw Boswell's appearance at the Stratford Jubilee, where he paraded to the admiration of all beholders in a costume described by himself (apparently) in a glowing article in the *London Magazine*. "Is it wrong, sir," he took speedy opportunity of inquiring from the oracle, "to affect singularity in order to make people stare?" "Yes," replied Johnson, "if you do it by propagating error, and indeed it is wrong in any way. There is in human nature a general inclination to make people stare, and every wise man has himself to cure of it, and does cure himself. If you wish to make people stare by doing better than others, why make them stare till they stare their eyes out. But consider how easy it is to make people stare by being absurd"—a proposition which he proceeds to illustrate by examples perhaps less telling than Boswell's recent performance.

The sage was less communicative on the question of marriage, though Boswell had anticipated some "instructive conversation" upon that topic. His sole remark was one from which Boswell "humbly differed." Johnson maintained that a wife was not the worse for being learned. Boswell, on the other hand, defined the proper degree of intelligence to be desired in a female companion by some verses in which Sir Thomas Overbury says that a wife should have some knowledge, and be "by nature wise, not learned much by art." Johnson said afterwards that Mrs. Boswell was in a proper degree inferior to her husband. So far as we can tell, she seems to have been a really sensible and good woman, who kept her husband's absurdities in check, and was, in her way,

a better wife than he deserved. So, happily, are most wives.

Johnson and Boswell had several meetings in 1769. Boswell had the honour of introducing the two objects of his idolatry, Johnson and Paoli, and on another occasion entertained a party including Goldsmith and Garrick and Reynolds, at his lodgings in Old Bond Street. We can still see the meeting more distinctly than many that have been swallowed by a few days of oblivion. They waited for one of the party, Johnson kindly maintaining that six ought to be kept waiting for one, if the one would suffer more by the others sitting down than the six by waiting. Meanwhile Garrick "played round Johnson with a fond vivacity, taking hold of the breasts of his coat, looking up in his face with a lively archness," and complimenting him on his good health. Goldsmith strutted about bragging of his dress, of which Boswell, in the serene consciousness of superiority to such weakness, thought him seriously vain. "Let me tell you," said Goldsmith, "when my tailor brought home my bloom-coloured coat, he said, 'Sir, I have a favour to beg of you; when anybody asks you who made your clothes, be pleased to mention John Filby, at the Harrow, Water Lane.'" "Why, sir," said Johnson, "that was because he knew that the strange colour would attract crowds to gaze at it, and thus they might hear of him, and see how well he could make a coat even of so absurd a colour." Mr. Filby has gone the way of all tailors and bloom-coloured coats, but some of his bills are preserved. On the day of this dinner he had delivered to Goldsmith a half-dress suit of ratteen lined with satin, costing twelve guineas, a pair of silk stocking-breeches for £2 5s. and a pair of bloom-coloured ditto for £1 4s. 6d. The

bill, including other items, was paid, it is satisfactory to add, in February, 1771.

The conversation was chiefly literary. Johnson repeated the concluding lines of the *Dunciad*; upon which some one (probably Boswell) ventured to say that they were "too fine for such a poem—a poem on what?" "Why," said Johnson, "on dunces! It was worth while being a dunce then. Ah, sir, hadst *thou* lived in those days!" Johnson presently uttered a criticism which has led some people to think that he had a touch of the dunce in him. He declared that a description of a temple in Congreve's *Mourning Bride* was the finest he knew—finer than anything in Shakspeare. Garrick vainly protested; but Johnson was inexorable. He compared Congreve to a man who had only ten guineas in the world, but all in one coin; whereas Shakspeare might have ten thousand separate guineas. The principle of the criticism is rather curious. "What I mean is," said Johnson, "that you can show me no passage where there is simply a description of material objects, without any admixture of moral notions, which produces such an effect." The description of the night before Agincourt was rejected because there were men in it; and the description of Dover Cliff because the boats and the crows "impede you fall." They do "not impress your mind at once with the horrible idea of immense height. The impression is divided; you pass on by computation from one stage of the tremendous space to another."

Probably most people will think that the passage in question deserves a very slight fraction of the praise bestowed upon it; but the criticism, like most of Johnson's, has a meaning which might be worth examining abstractedly from the special application which shocks the

idolaters of Shakspeare. Presently the party discussed Mrs. Montagu, whose Essay upon Shakspeare had made some noise. Johnson had a respect for her, caused in great measure by a sense of her liberality to his friend Miss Williams, of whom more must be said hereafter. He paid her some tremendous compliments, observing that some China plates which had belonged to Queen Elizabeth and to her, had no reason to be ashamed of a possessor so little inferior to the first. But he had his usual professional contempt for her amateur performances in literature. Her defence of Shakspeare against Voltaire did her honour, he admitted, but it would do nobody else honour. "No, sir, there is no real criticism in it: none showing the beauty of thought, as formed on the workings of the human heart." Mrs. Montagu was reported once to have complimented a modern tragedian, probably Jephson, by saying, "I tremble for Shakspeare." "When Shakspeare," said Johnson, "has got Jephson for his rival and Mrs. Montagu for his defender, he is in a poor state indeed." The conversation went on to a recently published book, *Kames's Elements of Criticism*, which Johnson praised, whilst Goldsmith said more truly, "It is easier to write that book than to read it." Johnson went on to speak of other critics. "There is no great merit," he said, "in telling how many plays have ghosts in them, and how this ghost is better than that. You must show how terror is impressed on the human heart. In the description of night in *Macbeth* the beetle and the bat detract from the general idea of darkness—inspissated gloom."

After Boswell's marriage he disappeared for some time from London, and his correspondence with Johnson dropped, as he says, without coldness, from pure procrastination. He did not return to London till 1772. In the

spring of that and the following year he renewed his old habits of intimacy, and inquired into Johnson's opinion upon various subjects ranging from ghosts to literary criticism. The height to which he had risen in the doctor's good opinion was marked by several symptoms. He was asked to dine at Johnson's house upon Easter day, 1773, and observes that his curiosity was as much gratified as by a previous dinner with Rousseau in the "wilds of Neuchâtel." He was now able to report, to the amazement of many inquirers, that Johnson's establishment was quite orderly. The meal consisted of very good soup, a boiled leg of lamb with spinach, a veal pie, and a rice pudding. A stronger testimony of good-will was his election, by Johnson's influence, into the Club. It ought apparently to be said that Johnson forced him upon the Club by letting it be understood that, till Boswell was admitted, no other candidate would have a chance. Boswell, however, was, as his proposer said, a thoroughly "clubable" man, and once a member, his good humour secured his popularity. On the important evening Boswell dined at Beauclerk's with his proposer and some other members. The talk turned upon Goldsmith's merits; and Johnson not only defended his poetry, but preferred him as a historian to Robertson. Such a judgment could be explained in Boswell's opinion by nothing but Johnson's dislike to the Scotch. Once before, when Boswell had mentioned Robertson in order to meet Johnson's condemnation of Scotch literature in general, Johnson had evaded him; "Sir, I love Robertson, and I won't talk of his book." On the present occasion he said that he would give to Robertson the advice offered by an old college tutor to a pupil; "read over your compositions, and whenever you meet with a passage which you think particularly fine, strike it out."

A good anecdote of Goldsmith followed. Johnson had said to him once in the Poets' Corner at Westminster,—

Forsitan et nostrum nomen miscebitur istis.

When they got to Temple Bar Goldsmith pointed to the heads of the Jacobites upon it and allily suggested,—

Forsitan et nostrum nomen miscebitur istis.

Johnson next pronounced a critical judgment which should be set against many sins of that kind. He praised the *Pilgrim's Progress* very warmly, and suggested that Bunyan had probably read Spenser.

After more talk the gentlemen went to the Club; and poor Boswell remained trembling with an anxiety which even the claims of Lady Di Beauclerk's conversation could not dissipate. The welcome news of his election was brought; and Boswell went to see Burke for the first time, and to receive a humorous charge from Johnson, pointing out the conduct expected from him as a good member. Perhaps some hints were given as to betrayal of confidence. Boswell seems at any rate to have had a certain reserve in repeating Club talk.

This intimacy with Johnson was about to receive a more public and even more impressive stamp. The antipathy to Scotland and the Scotch already noticed was one of Johnson's most notorious crotchets. The origin of the prejudice was forgotten by Johnson himself, though he was willing to accept a theory started by old Sheridan that it was resentment for the betrayal of Charles I. There is, however, nothing surprising in Johnson's partaking a prejudice common enough from the days of his youth, when each people supposed itself to have been cheated by the

Union, and Englishmen resented the advent of swarms of needy adventurers, talking with a strange accent and hanging together with honourable but vexatious persistence. Johnson was irritated by what was, after all, a natural defence against English prejudice. He declared that the Scotch were always ready to lie on each other's behalf. "The Irish," he said, "are not in a conspiracy to cheat the world by false representations of the merits of their countrymen. No, sir, the Irish are a fair people; they never speak well of one another." There was another difference. He always expressed a generous resentment against the tyranny exercised by English rulers over the Irish people. To some one who defended the restriction of Irish trade for the good of English merchants, he said, "Sir, you talk the language of a savage. What! sir, would you prevent any people from feeding themselves, if by any honest means they can do it?" It was "better to hang or drown people at once," than weaken them by unrelenting persecution. He felt some tenderness for Catholics, especially when oppressed, and a hearty antipathy towards prosperous Presbyterians. The Lowland Scotch were typified by John Knox, in regard to whom he expressed a hope, after viewing the ruins of St. Andrew's, that he was buried "in the highway."

This sturdy British and High Church prejudice did not prevent the worthy doctor from having many warm friendships with Scotchmen, and helping many distressed Scotch men in London. Most of the amanuenses employed for his *Dictionary* were Scotch. But he nourished the prejudice the more as giving an excellent pretext for many keen gibes. "Scotch learning," he said, for example, "is like bread in a besieged town. Every man gets a mouthful, but no man a bellyful." Once Strahan said in an

swer to some abusive remarks, "Well, sir, God made Scotland." "Certainly," replied Johnson, "but we must always remember that He made it for Scotchmen; and comparisons are odious, Mr. Strahan, but God made hell."

Boswell, therefore, had reason to feel both triumph and alarm when he induced the great man to accompany him in a Scotch tour. Boswell's journal of the tour appeared soon after Johnson's death. Johnson himself wrote an account of it, which is not without interest, though it is in his dignified style, which does not condescend to Boswellian touches of character. In 1773 the Scotch Highlands were still a little known region, justifying a book descriptive of manners and customs, and touching upon antiquities now the commonplaces of innumerable guide books. Scott was still an infant, and the day of enthusiasm, real or affected, for mountain scenery had not yet dawned. Neither of the travellers, as Boswell remarks, cared much for "rural beauties." Johnson says quaintly on the shores of Loch Ness, "It will very readily occur that this uniformity of barrenness can afford very little amusement to the traveller; that it is easy to sit at home and conceive rocks and heath and waterfalls; and that these journeys are useless labours, which neither impregnate the imagination nor enlarge the understanding." And though he shortly afterwards sits down on a bank "such as a writer of romance might have delighted to feign," and there conceived the thought of his book, he does not seem to have felt much enthusiasm. He checked Boswell for describing a hill as "immense," and told him that it was only a "considerable protuberance." Indeed it is not surprising if he sometimes grew weary in long rides upon Highland ponies, or if, when weatherbound in a remote village in Skye, he declared that this was a "waste of life"

On the whole, however, Johnson bore his fatigues well, preserved his temper, and made sensible remarks upon men and things. The pair started from Edinburgh in the middle of August, 1773; they went north along the eastern coast, through St. Andrew's, Aberdeen, Banff, Fort George, and Inverness. There they took to horses, rode to Glenelg, and took boat for Skye, where they landed on the 2nd of September. They visited Raasay, Coll, Mull, and Iona, and after some dangerous sailing got to the mainland at Oban on October 2nd. Thence they proceeded by Inverary and Loch Lomond to Glasgow; and after paying a visit to Boswell's paternal mansion at Auchinleck in Ayrshire, returned to Edinburgh in November. It were too long to narrate their adventures at length, or to describe in detail how Johnson grieved over traces of the iconoclastic zeal of Knox's disciples, seriously investigated stories of second-sight, cross-examined and brow-beat credulous believers in the authenticity of *Ossian*, and felt his piety grow warm among the ruins of Iona. Once or twice, when the temper of the travellers was tried by the various worries incident to their position, poor Boswell came in for some severe blows. But he was happy, feeling, as he remarks, like a dog who has run away with a large piece of meat, and is devouring it peacefully in a corner by himself. Boswell's spirits were irrepressible. On hearing a drum beat for dinner at Fort George, he says, with a Pepys-like touch, "I for a little while fancied myself a military man, and it pleased me." He got scandalously drunk on one occasion, and showed reprehensible levity on others. He bored Johnson by inquiring too curiously into his reasons for not wearing a nightcap—a subject which seems to have interested him profoundly; he permitted himself to say in his

journal that he was so much pleased with some pretty ladies' maids at the Duke of Argyll's, that he felt he could "have been a knight-errant for them," and his "venerable fellow-traveller" read the passage without censuring his levity. The great man himself could be equally volatile. "*I have often thought*," he observed one day, to Boswell's amusement, "that if I kept a seraglio, the ladies should all wear linen gowns"—as more cleanly. The pair agreed in trying to stimulate the feudal zeal of various Highland chiefs with whom they came in contact, and who were unreasonable enough to show a hankering after the luxuries of civilization.

Though Johnson seems to have been generally on his best behaviour, he had a rough encounter or two with some of the more civilized natives. Boswell piloted him safely through a visit to Lord Monboddo, a man of real ability, though the proprietor of crochets as eccentric as Johnson's, and consequently divided from him by strong mutual prejudices. At Auchinleck he was less fortunate. The old laird, who was the staunchest of Whigs, had not relished his son's hero-worship. "There is nae hope for Jamie, mon; Jamie is gnen clean gyte. What do you think, mon? He's done wi' Paoli—he's off wi' the land-louping scoundrel of a Corsican, and who's tail do you think he's pinned himself to now, mon?" "Here," says Sir Walter Scott, the authority for the story, "the old judge summoned up a sneer of most sovereign contempt. 'A dominie, mon—an auld dominie—he kepted a schùle and caauld it an acaademy.'" The two managed to keep the peace till, one day during Johnson's visit, they got upon Oliver Cromwell. Boswell suppresses the scene with obvious reluctance, his openness being checked for once by filial respect. Scott has fortu-

nately preserved the climax of old Boswell's argument. "What had Cromwell done for his country?" asked Johnson. "God, doctor, he gart Kings ken that they had a *lith* in their necks" retorted the laird, in a phrase worthy of Mr. Carlyle himself. Scott reports one other scene, at which respectable commentators, like Croker, hold up their hands in horror. Should we regret or rejoice to say that it involves an obvious inaccuracy? The authority, however, is too good to allow us to suppose that it was without some foundation. Adam Smith, it is said, met Johnson at Glasgow and had an altercation with him about the well known account of Hume's death. As Hume did not die till three years later, there must be some error in this. The dispute, however, whatever its date or subject, ended by Johnson saying to Smith, "*You lie.*" "And what did you reply?" was asked of Smith. "I said, 'you are a son of a ———.'" "On such terms," says Scott, "did these two great moralists meet and part, and such was the classical dialogue between these two great teachers of morality."

In the year 1774 Boswell found it expedient to atone for his long absence in the previous year by staying at home. Johnson managed to complete his account of the *Scottish Tour*, which was published at the end of the year. Among other consequences was a violent controversy with the lovers of *Ossian*. Johnson was a thorough sceptic as to the authenticity of the book. His scepticism did not repose upon the philological or antiquarian reasonings, which would be applicable in the controversy from internal evidence. It was to some extent the expression of a general incredulity which astonished his friends, especially when contrasted with his tenderness for many puerile superstitions. He could scarcely be induced to admit the

truth of any narrative which struck him as odd, and it was long, for example, before he would believe even in the Lisbon earthquake. Yet he seriously discussed the truth of second-sight; he carefully investigated the Cock-lane ghost—a goblin who anticipated some of the modern phenomena of so-called “spiritualism,” and with almost equal absurdity; he told stories to Boswell about a “shadowy being” which had once been seen by Cave, and declared that he had once heard his mother call “Sam” when he was at Oxford and she at Lichfield. The apparent inconsistency was in truth natural enough. Any man who clings with unreasonable pertinacity to the prejudices of his childhood, must be alternately credulous and sceptical in excess. In both cases, he judges by his fancies in defiance of evidence; and accepts and rejects according to his likes and dislikes, instead of his estimates of logical proof. *Ossian* would be naturally offensive to Johnson, as one of the earliest and most remarkable manifestations of that growing taste for what was called “Nature,” as opposed to civilization, of which Rousseau was the great mouthpiece. Nobody more heartily despised this form of “cant” than Johnson. A man who utterly despised the scenery of the Hebrides as compared with Greenwich Park or Charing Cross, would hardly take kindly to the Ossianesque version of the mountain passion. The book struck him as sheer rubbish. I have already quoted the retort about “many men, many women, and many children.” “A man,” he said, on another occasion, “might write such stuff for ever, if he would abandon his mind to it.”

The precise point, however, upon which he rested his case, was the tangible one of the inability of Macpherson to produce the manuscripts of which he had affirmed the

existence. Macpherson wrote a furious letter to Johnson, of which the purport can only be inferred from Johnson's smashing retort,—

"Mr. James MacPherson, I have received your foolish and impudent letter. Any violence offered me I shall do my best to repel; and what I cannot do for myself, the law shall do for me. I hope I shall never be deterred from detecting what I think a cheat by the menaces of a ruffian.

"What would you have me retract? I thought your book an imposture: I think it an imposture still. For this opinion I have given my reasons to the public, which I here dare you to refute. Your rage I defy. Your abilities, since your *Homer*, are not so formidable; and what I hear of your morals inclines me to pay regard not to what you shall say, but to what you shall prove. You may print this if you will.

"SAM. JOHNSON."

And so laying in a tremendous cudgel, the old gentleman (he was now sixty-six) awaited the assault, which, however, was not delivered.

In 1775 Boswell again came to London, and renewed some of the Scotch discussions. He attended a meeting of the Literary Club, and found the members disposed to laugh at Johnson's tenderness to the stories about second-sight. Boswell heroically avowed his own belief. "The evidence," he said, "is enough for me, though not for his great mind. What will not fill a quart bottle, will fill a pint bottle. I am filled with belief." "Are you?" said Colman; "then cork it up."

It was during this and the next few years that Boswell laboured most successfully in gathering materials for his book. In 1777 he only met Johnson in the country. In

1779, for some unexplained reason, he was lazy in making notes; in 1780 and 1781 he was absent from London; and in the following year, Johnson was visibly declining. The tenour of Johnson's life was interrupted during this period by no remarkable incidents, and his literary activity was not great, although the composition of the *Lives of the Poets* falls between 1777 and 1780. His mind, however, as represented by his talk, was in full vigour. I will take in order of time a few of the passages recorded by Boswell, which may serve for various reasons to afford the best illustration of his character. Yet it may be worth while once more to repeat the warning that such fragments moved from their context must lose most of their charm.

On March 26th (1775), Boswell met Johnson at the house of the publisher, Strahan. Strahan reminded Johnson of a characteristic remark which he had formerly made, that there are "few ways in which a man can be more innocently employed than in getting money." On another occasion Johnson observed with equal truth, if less originality, that cultivating kindness was an important part of life, as well as money-making. Johnson then asked to see a country lad whom he had recommended to Strahan as an apprentice. He asked for five guineas on account, that he might give one to the boy. "Nay, if a man recommends a boy and does nothing for him, it is sad work." A "little, thick short-legged boy" was accordingly brought into the courtyard, whither Johnson and Boswell descended, and the lexicographer bending himself down administered some good advice to the awe-struck lad with "slow and sonorous solemnity," ending by the presentation of the guinea.

In the evening the pair formed part of a corps of party

"wits," led by Sir Joshua Reynolds, to the benefit of Mrs. Abingdon, who had been a frequent model of the painter. Johnson praised Garrick's prologues, and Boswell kindly reported the eulogy to Garrick, with whom he supped at Beauclerk's. Garrick treated him to a mimicry of Johnson, repeating, "with pauses and half-whistling," the lines,—

Os homini sublimæ dedit—cœlumque tueri
Jussit—et erectos ad sidera tollere vultus :

looking downwards, and at the end touching the ground with a contorted gesticulation. Garrick was generally jealous of Johnson's light opinion of him, and used to take off his old master, saying, "Davy has some convivial pleasantry about him, but 'tis a futile fellow."

Next day, at Thrates', Johnson fell foul of Gray, one of his pet aversions. Boswell denied that Gray was dull in poetry. "Sir," replied Johnson, "he was dull in company, dull in his closet, dull everywhere. He was dull in a new way, and that made people think him great. He was a mechanical poet." He proceeded to say that there were only two good stanzas in the *Elegy*. Johnson's criticism was perverse; but if we were to collect a few of the judgments passed by contemporaries upon each other, it would be scarcely exceptional in its want of appreciation. It is rather odd to remark that Gray was generally condemned for obscurity—a charge which seems strangely out of place when he is measured by more recent standards.

A day or two afterwards some one rallied Johnson on his appearance at Mrs. Abingdon's benefit. "Why did you go?" he asked. "Did you see?" "No, sir." "Did you hear?" "No, sir." "Why, then, sir, did you

go?" "Because, sir, she is a favourite of the public; and when the public cares the thousandth part for you that it does for her, I will go to your benefit too."

The day after, Boswell won a bet from Lady Di Beauclerk by venturing to ask Johnson what he did with the orange-peel which he used to pocket. Johnson received the question amicably, but did not clear the mystery. "Then," said Boswell, "the world must be left in the dark. It must be said, he scraped them, and he let them dry, but what he did with them next he never could be prevailed upon to tell." "Nay, sir," replied Johnson, "you should say it more emphatically—he could not be prevailed upon, even by his dearest friends to tell."

This year Johnson received the degree of LL.D. from Oxford. He had previously (in 1765) received the same honour from Dublin. It is remarkable, however, that familiar as the title has become, Johnson called himself plain Mr. to the end of his days, and was generally so called by his intimates. On April 2nd, at a dinner at Hoole's, Johnson made another assault upon Gray and Mason. When Boswell said that there were good passages in Mason's *Elfrida*, he conceded that there were "now and then some good imitations of Milton's bad manner." After some more talk, Boswell spoke of the cheerfulness of Fleet Street. "Why, sir," said Johnson, "Fleet Street has a very animated appearance, but I think that the full tide of human existence is at Charing Cross." He added a story of an eminent tallow-chandler who had made a fortune in London, and was foolish enough to retire to the country. He grew so tired of his retreat, that he begged to know the melting-days of his successor, that he might be present at the operation.

On April 7th, they dined at a tavern, where the talk turned upon *Ossian*. Some one mentioned as an objection to its authenticity that no mention of wolves occurred in it. Johnson fell into a reverie upon wild beasts, and, whilst Reynolds and Langton were discussing something, he broke out, "Pennant tells of bears." What Pennant told is unknown. The company continued to talk, whilst Johnson continued his monologue, the word "bear" occurring at intervals, like a word in a catch. At last, when a pause came, he was going on: "We are told that the black bear is innocent, but I should not like to trust myself with him." Gibbon muttered in a low tone, "I should not like to trust myself with *you*"—a prudent resolution, says honest Boswell who hated Gibbon, if it referred to a competition of abilities.

The talk went on to patriotism, and Johnson laid down an apophthegm, at "which many will start," many people, in fact, having little sense of humour. Such persons may be reminded for their comfort that at this period patriot had a technical meaning. "Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel." On the 10th of April, he laid down another dogma, calculated to offend the weaker brethren. He defended Pope's line—

Man never is but always *to be* blest.

And being asked if man did not sometimes enjoy a momentary happiness, replied, "Never, but when he is drunk." It would be useless to defend these and other such utterances to any one who cannot enjoy them without defence.

On April 11th, the pair went in Reynolds's coach to dine with Cambridge, at Twickenham. Johnson was in high spirits. He remarked as they drove down, upon the

rarity of good humour in life. One friend mentioned by Boswell was, he said, *acid*, and another *muddy*. At last, stretching himself and turning with complacency, he observed, "I look upon myself as a good humoured fellow"—a bit of self-esteem against which Boswell protested. Johnson, he admitted, was good-natured; but was too irascible and impatient to be good-humoured. On reaching Cambridge's house, Johnson ran to look at the books. "Mr. Johnson," said Cambridge politely, "I am going with your pardon to accuse myself, for I have the same custom which I perceive you have. But it seems odd that one should have such a desire to look at the backs of books." "Sir," replied Johnson, wheeling about at the words, "the reason is very plain. Knowledge is of two kinds. We know a subject ourselves, or we know where we can find information upon it. When we inquire into any subject, the first thing we have to do is to know what books have treated of it. This leads us to look at catalogues, and the backs of books in libraries."

A pleasant talk followed. Johnson denied the value attributed to historical reading, on the ground that we know very little except a few facts and dates. All the colouring, he said, was conjectural. Boswell chuckles over the reflection that Gibbon, who was present, did not take up the cudgels for his favourite study, though the first-fruits of his labours were to appear in the following year. "Probably he did not like to trust himself with Johnson."

The conversation presently turned upon the *Beggar's Opera*, and Johnson sensibly refused to believe that any man had been made a rogue by seeing it. Yet the moralist felt bound to utter some condemnation of such a performance, and at last, amidst the smothered amusement of the company, collected himself to give a heavy stroke:

"there is in it," he said, "such a *lubefactation* of all principles as may be dangerous to morality."

A discussion followed as to whether Sheridan was right for refusing to allow his wife to continue as a public singer. Johnson defended him "with all the high spirit of a Roman senator." "He resolved wisely and nobly, to be sure. He is a brave man. Would not a gentleman be disgraced by having his wife sing publicly for hire? No, sir, there can be no doubt here. I know not if I should not prepare myself for a public singer as readily as let my wife be one."

The stout old supporter of social authority went on to denounce the politics of the day. He asserted that politics had come to mean nothing but the art of rising in the world. He contrasted the absence of any principles with the state of the national mind during the stormy days of the seventeenth century. This gives the pith of Johnson's political prejudices. He hated Whigs blindly from his cradle; but he justified his hatred on the ground that they were now all "bottomless Whigs," that is to say, that pierce where you would, you came upon no definite creed, but only upon hollow formulæ, intended as a cloak for private interest. If Burke and one or two of his friends be excepted, the remark had but too much justice.

In 1776, Boswell found Johnson rejoicing in the prospect of a journey to Italy with the Thrales. Before starting he was to take a trip to the country, in which Boswell agreed to join. Boswell gathered up various bits of advice before their departure. One seems to have commended itself to him as specially available for practice. "A man who had been drinking freely," said the moralist, "should never go into a new company. He

would probably strike them as ridiculous, though he might be in unison with those who had been drinking with him." Johnson propounded another favourite theory. "A ship," he said, "was worse than a gaol. There is in a gaol better air, better company, better conveniency of every kind; and a ship has the additional disadvantage of being in danger."

On March 19th, they went by coach to the Angel at Oxford; and next morning visited the Master of University College, who chose with Boswell to act in opposition to a very sound bit of advice given by Johnson soon afterwards—perhaps with some reference to the proceeding. "Never speak of a man in his own presence; it is always indelicate and may be offensive." The two, however, discussed Johnson without reserve. The Master said that he would have given Johnson a hundred pounds for a discourse on the British Constitution; and Boswell suggested that Johnson should write two volumes of no great bulk upon Church and State, which should comprise the whole substance of the argument. "He should erect a fort on the confines of each." Johnson was not unnaturally displeased with the dialogue, and growled out, "Why should I be always writing?"

Presently, they went to see Dr. Adams, the doctor's old friend, who had been answering Hume. Boswell, who had done his best to court the acquaintance of Voltaire, Rousseau, Wilkes, and Hume himself, felt it desirable to reprove Adams for having met Hume with civility. He aired his admirable sentiments in a long speech, observing upon the connexion between theory and practice, and remarking, by way of practical application, that, if an infidel were at once vain and ugly, he might be compared to "Cicero's beautiful image of Virtue"—which would, as he

seems to think, be a crushing retort. Boswell always delighted in fighting with his gigantic backer close behind him. Johnson, as he had doubtless expected, chimed in with the argument. "You should do your best," said Johnson, "to diminish the authority, as well as dispute the arguments of your adversary, because most people are biased more by personal respect than by reasoning." "You would not jostle a chimney-sweeper," said Adams. "Yes," replied Johnson, "if it were necessary to jostle him down."

The pair proceeded by post-chaise past Blenheim, and dined at a good inn at Chapelhouse. Johnston boasted of the superiority, long since vanished if it ever existed, of English to French inns, and quoted with great emotion Shenstone's lines—

Who'er has travell'd life's dull round,
Where'er his stages may have been,
Must sigh to think he still has found
The warmest welcome at an inn.

As they drove along rapidly in the post-chaise, he exclaimed, "Life has not many better things than this." On another occasion he said that he should like to spend his life driving briskly in a post-chaise with a pretty woman, clever enough to add to the conversation. The pleasure was partly owing to the fact that his deafness was less troublesome in a carriage. But he admitted that there were drawbacks even to this pleasure. Boswell asked him whether he would not add a post-chaise journey to the other sole cause of happiness—namely, drunkenness. "No, sir," said Johnson, "you are driving rapidly *from* something or *to* something."

They went to Birmingham, where Boswell pumped

Hector about Johnson's early days, and saw the works of Boulton, Watt's partner, who said to him, "I sell here, sir, what all the world desires to have—*power*." Thence they went to Lichfield, and met more of the rapidly thinning circle of Johnson's oldest friends. Here Boswell was a little scandalized by Johnson's warm exclamation on opening a letter—"One of the most dreadful things that has happened in my time!" This turned out to be the death of Thrale's only son. Boswell thought the phrase too big for the event, and was some time before he could feel a proper concern. He was, however, "curious to observe how Dr. Johnson would be affected," and was again a little scandalized by the reply to his consolatory remark that the Thrales still had daughters. "Sir," said Johnson, "don't you know how you yourself think? Sir, he wishes to propagate his name." The great man was actually putting the family sentiment of a brewer in the same category with the sentiments of the heir of Auchinleck. Johnson, however, calmed down, but resolved to hurry back to London. They stayed a night at Taylor's, who remarked that he had fought a good many battles for a physician, one of their common friends. "But you should consider, sir," said Johnson, "that by every one of your victories he is a loser; for every man of whom you get the better will be very angry, and resolve not to employ him, whereas if people get the better of you in argument about him, they will think 'We'll send for Dr. ——— nevertheless!'"

It was after their return to London that Boswell won the greatest triumph of his friendship. He carried through a negotiation, to which, as Burke pleasantly said, there was nothing equal in the whole history of the *corps diplomatique*. At some moment of enthusiasm it had occurred

to him to bring Johnson into company with Wilkes. The infidel demagogue was probably in the mind of the Tory High Churchman, when he threw out that pleasant little apophthegm about patriotism. To bring together two such opposites without provoking a collision would be the crowning triumph of Boswell's curiosity. He was ready to run all hazards as a chemist might try some new experiment at the risk of a destructive explosion; but being resolved, he took every precaution with admirable foresight.

Boswell had been invited by the Dillys, well-known booksellers of the day, to meet Wilkes. "Let us have Johnson," suggested the gallant Boswell. "Not for the world," exclaimed Dilly. But, on Boswell's undertaking the negotiation, he consented to the experiment. Boswell went off to Johnson and politely invited him in Dilly's name. "I will wait upon him," said Johnson. "Provided, sir, I suppose," said the diplomatic Boswell, "that the company which he is to have is agreeable to you." "What do you mean, sir?" exclaimed Johnson. "What do you take me for? Do you think I am so ignorant of the world as to prescribe to a gentleman what company he is to have at his table?" Boswell worked the point a little farther, till, by judicious manipulation, he had got Johnson to commit himself to meeting anybody—even Jack Wilkes, to make a wild hypothesis—at the Dillys' table. Boswell retired, venturing to hope that he had fixed the discussion in Johnson's mind.

The great day arrived, and Boswell, like a consummate general who leaves nothing to chance, went himself to fetch Johnson to the dinner. The great man had forgotten the engagement, and was "buffeting his books" in a dirty shirt and amidst clouds of dust. When reminded

of his promise, he said that he had ordered dinner at home with Mrs. Williams. Entreaties of the warmest kind from Boswell softened the peevish old lady, to whose pleasure Johnson had referred him. Boswell flew back, announced Mrs. Williams's consent, and Johnson roared, "Frank, a clean shirt!" and was soon in a hackney-coach. Boswell rejoiced like a "fortune-hunter who has got an heiress into a post-chaise with him to set out for Gretna Green." Yet the joy was with trembling. Arrived at Dillys', Johnson found himself amongst strangers, and Boswell watched anxiously from a corner. "Who is that gentleman?" whispered Johnson to Dilly. "Mr. Arthur Lee." Johnson whistled "too-too-too" doubtfully, for Lee was a patriot and an American. "And who is the gentleman in lace?" "Mr. Wilkes, sir." Johnson subsided into a window-seat and fixed his eye on a book. He was fairly in the toils. His reproof of Boswell was recent enough to prevent him from exhibiting his displeasure, and he resolved to restrain himself.

At dinner Wilkes, placed next to Johnson, took up his part in the performance. He pacified the sturdy moralist by delicate attentions to his needs. He helped him carefully to some fine veal. "Pray give me leave, sir; it is better here—a little of the brown—some fat, sir—a little of the stuffing—some gravy—let me have the pleasure of giving you some butter. Allow me to recommend a squeeze of this orange; or the lemon, perhaps, may have more zest." "Sir, sir," cried Johnson, "I am obliged to you, sir," bowing and turning to him, with a look for some time of "surly virtue," and soon of complacency.

Gradually the conversation became cordial. Johnson told of the fascination exercised by Foote, who, like Wilkes, had succeeded in pleasing him against his will.

Foots once took to selling beer, and it was so bad that the servants of Fitzherbert, one of his customers, resolved to protest. They chose a little black boy to carry their remonstrance; but the boy waited at table one day when Foote was present, and returning to his companions, said, "This is the finest man I have ever seen. I will not deliver your message; I will drink his beer." From Foote the transition was easy to Garrick, whom Johnson, as usual, defended against the attacks of others. He maintained that Garrick's reputation for avarice, though unfounded, had been rather useful than otherwise. "You despise a man for avarice, but you do not hate him." The clamour would have been more effectual, had it been directed against his living with splendour too great for a player. Johnson went on to speak of the difficulty of getting biographical information. When he had wished to write a life of Dryden, he applied to two living men who remembered him. One could only tell him that Dryden had a chair by the fire at Will's Coffee-house in winter, which was moved to the balcony in summer. The other (Cibber) could only report that he remembered Dryden as a "decent old man, arbiter of critical disputes at Will's."

Johnson and Wilkes had one point in common—a vigorous prejudice against the Scotch, and upon this topic they cracked their jokes in friendly emulation. When they met upon a later occasion (1781), they still pursued this inexhaustible subject. Wilkes told how a privateer had completely plundered seven Scotch islands, and embarked with three and sixpence. Johnson now remarked in answer to somebody who said "Poor old England is lost!" "Sir, it is not so much to be lamented that old England is lost, as that the Scotch have found it."

"You must know, sir," he said to Wilkes, "that I lately took my friend Boswell and showed him genuine civilized life in an English provincial town. I turned him loose at Lichfield, that he might see for once real civility, for you know he lives among savages in Scotland and among rakes in London." "Except," said Wilkes, "when he is with grave, sober, decent people like you and me." "And we ashamed of him," added Johnson, smiling.

Boswell had to bear some jokes against himself and his countrymen from the pair; but he had triumphed, and rejoiced greatly when he went home with Johnson, and heard the great man speak of his pleasant dinner to Mrs. Williams. Johnson seems to have been permanently reconciled to his foe. "Did we not hear so much said of Jack Wilkes," he remarked next year, "we should think more highly of his conversation. Jack has a great variety of talk, Jack is a scholar, and Jack has the manners of a gentleman. But, after hearing his name sounded from pole to pole as the phoenix of convivial felicity, we are disappointed in his company. He has always been at me, but I would do Jack a kindness rather than not. The contest is now over."

In fact, Wilkes had ceased to play any part in public life. When Johnson met him next (in 1781) they joked about such dangerous topics as some of Wilkes's political performances. Johnson sent him a copy of the *Lives*, and they were seen conversing *tête-à-tête* in confidential whispers about George II. and the King of Prussia. To Boswell's mind it suggested the happy days when the lion should lie down with the kid, or, as Dr. Barnard suggested, the goat.

In the year 1777 Johnson began the *Lives of the Poets*, in compliance with a request from the booksellers, who

wished for prefaces to a large collection of English poetry. Johnson asked for this work the extremely modest sum of 200 guineas, when he might easily, according to Malone, have received 1000 or 1500. He did not meet Boswell till September, when they spent ten days together at Dr. Taylor's. The subject which specially interested Boswell at this time was the fate of the unlucky Dr. Dodd, hanged for forgery in the previous June. Dodd seems to have been a worthless charlatan of the popular preacher variety. His crime would not in our days have been thought worthy of so severe a punishment; but his contemporaries were less shocked by the fact of death being inflicted for such a fault, than by the fact of its being inflicted on a clergyman. Johnson exerted himself to procure a remission of the sentence by writing various letters and petitions on Dodd's behalf. He seems to have been deeply moved by the man's appeal, and could "not bear the thought" that any negligence of his should lead to the death of a fellow-creature; but he said that if he had himself been in authority he would have signed the death-warrant, and for the man himself he had as little respect as might be. He said, indeed, that Dodd was right in not joining in the "cant" about leaving a wretched world. "No, no," said the poor rogue, "it has been a very agreeable world to me." Dodd had allowed to pass for his own one of the papers composed for him by Johnson, and the Doctor was not quite pleased. When, however, Seward expressed a doubt as to Dodd's power of writing so forcibly, Johnson felt bound not to expose him. "Why should you think so? Depend upon it, sir, when any man knows he is to be hanged in a fortnight, it concentrates his mind wonderfully." On another occasion, Johnson expressed a doubt

himself as to whether Dodd had really composed a certain prayer on the night before his execution. "Sir, do you think that a man the night before he is to be hanged cares for the succession of the royal family? Though he *may* have composed this prayer then. A man who has been canting all his life may cant to the last; and yet a man who has been refused a pardon after so much petitioning, would hardly be praying thus fervently for the king."

The last day at Taylor's was characteristic. Johnson was very cordial to his disciple, and Boswell fancied that he could defend his master at "the point of his sword." "My regard for you," said Johnson, "is greater almost than I have words to express, but I do not choose to be always repeating it. Write it down in the first leaf of your pocket-book, and never doubt of it again." They became sentimental, and talked of the misery of human life. Boswell spoke of the pleasures of society. "Alas, sir," replied Johnson, like a true pessimist, "these are only struggles for happiness!" He felt exhilarated, he said, when he first went to Ranelagh, but he changed to the mood of Xerxes weeping at the sight of his army. "It went to my heart to consider that there was not one in all that brilliant circle that was not afraid to go home and think; but that the thoughts of each individual would be distressing when alone." Some years before he had gone with Boswell to the Pantheon and taken a more cheerful view. When Boswell doubted whether there were many happy people present, he said, "Yes, sir, there are many happy people here. There are many people here who are watching hundreds, and who think hundreds are watching them." The more permanent feeling was that which he expressed in the "serene autumn night" in Taylor's garden. He was willing, however, to talk

calmly about eternal punishment, and to admit the possibility of a "mitigated interpretation."

After supper he dictated to Boswell an argument in favour of the negro who was then claiming his liberty in Scotland. He hated slavery with a zeal which the excellent Boswell thought to be "without knowledge;" and on one occasion gave as a toast to some "very grave men" at Oxford, "Here's to the next insurrection of negroes in the West Indies." The hatred was combined with as hearty a dislike for American independence. "How is it," he said, "that we always hear the loudest yelps for liberty amongst the drivers of negroes?" The harmony of the evening was unluckily spoilt by an explosion of this prejudice. Boswell undertook the defence of the colonists, and the discussion became so fierce that though Johnson had expressed a willingness to sit up all night with him, they were glad to part after an hour or two, and go to bed.

In 1778, Boswell came to London and found Johnson absorbed, to an extent which apparently excited his jealousy, by his intimacy with the *Thrales*. They had, however, several agreeable meetings. One was at the club, and Boswell's report of the conversation is the fullest that we have of any of its meetings. A certain reserve is indicated by his using initials for the interlocutors, of whom, however, one can be easily identified as Burke. The talk began by a discussion of an antique statue, said to be the dog of Alcibiades, and valued at 1000*l*. Burke said that the representation of no animal could be worth so much. Johnson, whose taste for art was a vanishing quantity, said that the value was proportional to the difficulty. A statue, as he argued on another occasion, would be worth nothing if it were cut out of a carrot. Every

thing, he now said, was valuable which "enlarged the sphere of human powers." The first man who balanced a straw upon his nose, or rode upon three horses at once, deserved the applause of mankind; and so statues of animals should be preserved as a proof of dexterity, though men should not continue such fruitless labours.

The conversation became more instructive under the guidance of Burke. He maintained what seemed to his hearers a paradox, though it would be interesting to hear his arguments from some profounder economist than Boswell, that a country would be made more populous by emigration. "There are bulls enough in Ireland," he remarked incidentally in the course of the argument. "So, sir, I should think from your argument," said Johnson, for once condescending to an irresistible pun. It is recorded, too, that he once made a bull himself, observing that a horse was so slow that when it went up hill, it stood still. If he now failed to appreciate Burke's argument, he made one good remark. Another speaker said that unhealthy countries were the most populous. "Countries which are the most populous," replied Johnson, "have the most destructive diseases. That is the true state of the proposition;" and indeed, the remark applies to the case of emigration.

A discussion then took place as to whether it would be worth while for Burke to take so much trouble with speeches which never decided a vote. Burke replied that a speech, though it did not gain one vote, would have an influence, and maintained that the House of Commons was not wholly corrupt. "We are all more or less governed by interest," was Johnson's comment. "But interest will not do everything. In a case which admits of doubt, we try to think on the side which is for our inte-

rest, and generally bring ourselves to act accordingly. But the subject must admit of diversity of colouring; it must receive a colour on that side. In the House of Commons there are members enough who will not vote what is grossly absurd and unjust. No, sir, there must always be right enough, or appearance of right, to keep wrong in countenance." After some deviations, the conversation returned to this point. Johnson and Burke agreed on a characteristic statement. Burke said that from his experience he had learnt to think better of mankind. "From my experience," replied Johnson, "I have found them worse on commercial dealings, more disposed to cheat than I had any notion of; but more disposed to do one another good than I had conceived." "Less just, and more beneficent," as another speaker suggested. Johnson proceeded to say that considering the pressure of want, it was wonderful that men would do so much for each other. The greatest liar is said to speak more truth than falsehood, and perhaps the worst man might do more good than not. But when Boswell suggested that perhaps experience might increase our estimate of human happiness, Johnson returned to his habitual pessimism. "No, sir, the more we inquire, the more we shall find men less happy." The talk soon wandered off into a disquisition upon the folly of deliberately testing the strength of our friend's affection.

The evening ended by Johnson accepting a commission to write to a friend who had given to the Club a hogshead of claret, and to request another, with "a happy ambiguity of expression," in the hopes that it might also be a present.

Some days afterwards, another conversation took place, which has a certain celebrity in Boswellian literature. The scene was at Dilly's, and the guests included Miss

Seward and Mrs. Knowles, a well-known Quaker Lady. Before dinner Johnson seized upon a book which he kept in his lap during dinner, wrapped up in the table-cloth. His attention was not distracted from the serious business of the hour, but he hit upon a topic which happily combined the two appropriate veins of thought. He boasted that he would write a cookery-book upon philosophical principles; and declared in opposition to Miss Seward that such a task was beyond the sphere of woman. Perhaps this led to a discussion upon the privileges of men, in which Johnson put down Mrs. Knowles, who had some hankering for women's rights, by the Shakspearian maxim that if two men ride on a horse, one must ride behind. Driven from her position in this world, poor Mrs. Knowles hoped that sexes might be equal in the next. Boswell reproved her by the remark already quoted, that men might as well expect to be equal to angels. He enforces this view by an illustration suggested by the "Rev. Mr. Brown of Utrecht," who had observed that a great or small glass might be equally full, though not holding equal quantities. Mr. Brown intended this for a confutation of Hume, who has said that a little Miss, dressed for a ball, may be as happy as an orator who has won some triumphant success.¹

The conversation thus took a theological turn, and Mrs. Knowles was fortunate enough to win Johnson's high approval. He defended a doctrine maintained by Soame Jenyns, that friendship is *not* a Christian virtue. Mrs. Knowles remarked that Jesus had twelve disciples,

¹ Boswell remarks as a curious coincidence that the same illustration had been used by a Dr. King, a dissenting minister. Doubtless it has been used often enough. For one instance see *Donne's Sermons* (Alford's Edition), vol. i., p. 5.

but there was *one* whom he *loved*. Johnson, "with eyes sparkling benignantly," exclaimed, "Very well indeed, madam; you have said very well!"

So far all had gone smoothly; but here, for some inexplicable reason, Johnson burst into a sudden fury against the American rebels, whom he described as "rascals, robbers, pirates," and roared out a tremendous volley, which might almost have been audible across the Atlantic. Boswell sat and trembled, but gradually diverted the sage to less exciting topics. The name of Jonathan Edwards suggested a discussion upon free will and necessity, upon which poor Boswell was much given to worry himself. Some time afterwards Johnson wrote to him, in answer to one of his lamentations: "I hoped you had got rid of all this hypocrisy of misery. What have you to do with liberty and necessity? Or what more than to hold your tongue about it?" Boswell could never take this sensible advice; but he got little comfort from his oracle. "We know that we are all free, and there's an end on't," was his statement on one occasion, and now he could only say, "All theory is against the freedom of the will, and all experience for it."

Some familiar topics followed, which play a great part in Boswell's reports. Among the favourite topics of the sentimentalists of the day was the denunciation of "luxury," and of civilized life in general. There was a disposition to find in the South Sea savages or American Indians an embodiment of the fancied state of nature. Johnson heartily despised the affectation. He was told of an American woman who had to be bound in order to keep her from savage life. "She must have been an animal, a beast," said Boswell. "Sir," said Johnson, "she was a speaking cat." Somebody quoted

to him with admiration the soliloquy of an officer who had lived in the wilds of America: "Here am I, free and unrestrained, amidst the rude magnificence of nature, with the Indian woman by my side, and this gun, with which I can procure food when I want it! What more can be desired for human happiness?" "Do not allow yourself, sir," replied Johnson, "to be imposed upon by such gross absurdity. It is sad stuff; it is brutish. If a bull could speak, he might as well exclaim, 'Here am I with this cow and this grass; what being can enjoy greater felicity?'" When Johnson implored Boswell to "clear his mind of cant," he was attacking his disciple for affecting a serious depression about public affairs; but the cant which he hated would certainly have included as its first article an admiration for the state of nature.

On the present occasion Johnson defended luxury, and said that he had learnt much from Mandeville—a shrewd cynic, in whom Johnson's hatred for humbug is exaggerated into a general disbelief in real as well as sham nobleness of sentiment. As the conversation proceeded, Johnson expressed his habitual horror of death, and caused Miss Seward's ridicule by talking seriously of ghosts and the importance of the question of their reality; and then followed an explosion, which seems to have closed this characteristic evening. A young woman had become a Quaker under the influence of Mrs. Knowles, who now proceeded to deprecate Johnson's wrath at what he regarded as an apostasy. "Madam," he said, "she is an odious wench," and he proceeded to denounce her audacity in presuming to choose a religion for herself. "She knew no more of the points of difference," he said, "than of the difference between the Copernican and Ptolemaic systems." When Mrs. Knowles said that she

had the New Testament before her, he said that it was the "most difficult book in the world," and he proceeded to attack the unlucky proselyte with a fury which shocked the two ladies. Mrs. Knowles afterwards published a report of this conversation, and obtained another report, with which, however, she was not satisfied, from Miss Seward. Both of them represent the poor doctor as hopelessly confuted by the mild dignity and calm reason of Mrs. Knowles, though the triumph is painted in far the brightest colours by Mrs. Knowles herself. Unluckily, there is not a trace of Johnson's manner, except in one phrase, in either report, and they are chiefly curious as an indirect testimony to Boswell's superior powers. The passage, in which both the ladies agree, is that Johnson, on the expression of Mrs. Knowles's hope that he would meet the young lady in another world, retorted that he was not fond of meeting fools anywhere.

Poor Boswell was at this time a water-drinker by Johnson's recommendation, though unluckily for himself he never broke off his drinking habits for long. They had a conversation at Paoli's, in which Boswell argued against his present practice. Johnson remarked "that wine gave a man nothing, but only put in motion what had been locked up in frost." It was a key, suggested some one, which opened a box, but the box might be full or empty. "Nay, sir," said Johnson, "conversation is the key, wine is a picklock, which forces open the box and injures it. A man should cultivate his mind, so as to have that confidence and readiness without wine which wine gives." Boswell characteristically said that the great difficulty was from "benevolence." It was hard to refuse "a good, worthy man" who asked you to try his cellar. This, according

to Johnson, was mere conceit, implying an exaggerated estimate of your importance to your entertainer. Reynolds gallantly took up the opposite side, and produced the one recorded instance of a Johnsonian blush. "I won't argue any more with you, sir," said Johnson, who thought every man to be elevated who drank wine, "you are too far gone." "I should have thought so indeed, sir, had I made such a speech as you have now done," said Reynolds; and Johnson apologized with the aforesaid blush.

The explosion was soon over on this occasion. Not long afterwards, Johnson attacked Boswell so fiercely at a dinner at Reynolds's, that the poor disciple kept away for a week. They made it up when they met next, and Johnson solaced Boswell's wounded vanity by highly commending an image made by him to express his feelings. "I don't care how often or how high Johnson tosses me, when only friends are present, for then I fall upon soft ground; but I do not like falling on stones, which is the case when enemies are present." The phrase may recall one of Johnson's happiest illustrations. When some one said in his presence that a *congé d'élire* might be considered as only a strong recommendation: "Sir," replied Johnson, "it is such a recommendation as if I should throw you out of a two-pair of stairs window, and recommend you to fall soft."

It is perhaps time to cease these extracts from Boswell's reports. The next two years were less fruitful. In 1779 Boswell was careless, though twice in London, and in 1780, he did not pay his annual visit. Boswell has partly filled up the gap by a collection of sayings made by Langton, some passages from which have been quoted, and his correspondence gives various details. Garrick died in January of 1779, and Beauclerk in

March, 1780. Johnson himself seems to have shown few symptoms of increasing age; but a change was approaching, and the last years of his life were destined to be clouded, not merely by physical weakness, but by a change of circumstances which had great influence upon his happiness.

CHAPTER V.

THE CLOSING YEARS OF JOHNSON'S LIFE.

IN following Boswell's guidance we have necessarily seen only one side of Johnson's life; and probably that side which had least significance for the man himself.

Boswell saw in him chiefly the great dictator of conversation; and though the reports of Johnson's talk represent his character in spite of some qualifications with unusual fulness, there were many traits very inadequately revealed at the Mitre or the Club, at Mrs. Thrale's, or in meetings with Wilkes or Reynolds. We may catch some glimpses from his letters and diaries of that inward life which consisted generally in a long succession of struggles against an oppressive and often paralysing melancholy. Another most noteworthy side to his character is revealed in his relations to persons too humble for admission to the tables at which he exerted a despotic sway. Upon this side Johnson was almost entirely loveable. We often have to regret the imperfection of the records of

That best portion of a good man's life,
His little, nameless, unremembered acts
Of kindness and of love.

Everywhere in Johnson's letters and in the occasional anecdotes, we come upon indications of a tenderness and untiring benevolence which would make us forgive

far worse faults than have ever been laid to his charge. Nay, the very asperity of the man's outside becomes endeared to us by the association. His irritability never vented itself against the helpless, and his rough impatience of fanciful troubles implied no want of sympathy for real sorrow. One of Mrs. Thrale's anecdotes is intended to show Johnson's harshness :—"When I one day lamented the loss of a first cousin killed in America, 'Pr'ythee, my dear,' said he, 'have done with canting; how would the world be the worse for it, I may ask, if all your relations were at once spitted like larks and roasted for Presto's supper?' Presto was the dog that lay under the table while we talked." The counter version, given by Boswell is, that Mrs. Thrale related her cousin's death in the midst of a hearty supper, and that Johnson, shocked at her want of feeling, said, "Madam, it would give *you* very little concern if all your relations were spitted like those larks, and roasted for Presto's supper." Taking the most unfavourable version, we may judge how much real indifference to human sorrow was implied by seeing how Johnson was affected by a loss of one of his humblest friends. It is but one case of many. In 1767, he took leave, as he notes in his diary, of his "dear old friend, Catherine Chambers," who had been for about forty-three years in the service of his family. "I desired all to withdraw," he says, "then told her that we were to part for ever, and, as Christians, we should part with prayer, and that I would, if she was willing, say a short prayer beside her. She expressed great desire to hear me, and held up her poor hands as she lay in bed, with great fervour, while I prayed, kneeling by her, in nearly the following words"—which shall not be repeated here—"I then kissed her," he adds. "She told me that to part was the greatest pain

that she had ever felt, and that she hoped we should meet again in a better place. I expressed, with swelled eyes, and great emotion of kindness, the same hopes. We kissed and parted—I humbly hope to meet again and part no more.”

A man with so true and tender a heart could say sincerely, what with some men would be a mere excuse for want of sympathy, that he “hated to hear people whine about metaphysical distresses when there was so much want and hunger in the world.” He had a sound and righteous contempt for all affectation of excessive sensibility. Suppose, said Boswell to him, whilst their common friend Baretti was lying under a charge of murder, “that one of your intimate friends were apprehended for an offence for which he might be hanged.” “I should do what I could,” replied Johnson, “to bail him, and give him any other assistance; but if he were once fairly hanged, I should not suffer.” “Would you eat your dinner that day, sir?” asks Boswell. “Yes, sir; and eat it as if he were eating with me. Why there’s Baretti, who’s to be tried for his life to-morrow. Friends have risen up for him upon every side; yet if he should be hanged, none of them will eat a slice of plum-pudding the less. Sir, that sympathetic feeling goes a very little way in depressing the mind.” Boswell illustrated the subject by saying that Tom Davies had just written a letter to Foote, telling him that he could not sleep from concern about Baretti, and at the same time recommending a young man who kept a pickle-shop. Johnson summed up by the remark: “You will find these very feeling people are not very ready to do you good. They *pay* you by *feeling*.” Johnson never objected to feeling, but to the waste of feeling.

In a similar vein he told Mrs. Thrale that a “surly fel-

low" like himself had no compassion to spare for "wounds given to vanity and softness," whilst witnessing the common sight of actual want in great cities. On Lady Tavistock's death, said to have been caused by grief for her husband's loss, he observed that her life might have been saved if she had been put into a small chandler's shop, with a child to nurse. When Mrs. Thrale suggested that a lady would be grieved because her friend had lost the chance of a fortune, "She will suffer as much, perhaps," he replied, "as your horse did when your cow miscarried." Mrs. Thrale testifies that he once reproached her sternly for complaining of the dust. When he knew, he said, how many poor families would perish next winter for want of the bread which the drought would deny, he could not bear to hear ladies sighing for rain on account of their complexions or their clothes. While reporting such sayings, she adds, that he loved the poor as she never saw any one else love them, with an earnest desire to make them happy. His charity was unbounded; he proposed to allow himself one hundred a year out of the three hundred of his pension; but the Thrales could never discover that he really spent upon himself more than 70*l.*, or at most 80*l.* He had numerous dependants, abroad as well as at home, who "did not like to see him latterly, unless he brought 'em money." He filled his pockets with small cash which he distributed to beggars in defiance of political economy. When told that the recipients only laid it out upon gin or tobacco, he replied that it was savage to deny them the few coarse pleasures which the richer disdained. Numerous instances are given of more judicious charity. When, for example, a Benedictine monk, whom he had seen in Paris, became a Protestant, Johnson supported him for some months in London, till he could get a living.

Once coming home late at night, he found a poor woman lying in the street. He carried her to his house on his back, and found that she was reduced to the lowest stage of want, poverty, and disease. He took care of her at his own charge, with all tenderness, until she was restored to health, and tried to have her put into a virtuous way of living. His house, in his later years, was filled with various waifs and strays, to whom he gave hospitality and sometimes support, defending himself by saying that if he did not help them nobody else would. The head of his household was Miss Williams, who had been a friend of his wife's, and after coming to stay with him, in order to undergo an operation for cataract, became a permanent inmate of his house. She had a small income of some 40*l.* a year, partly from the charity of connexions of her father's, and partly arising from a little book of miscellanies published by subscription. She was a woman of some sense and cultivation, and when she died (in 1783) Johnson said that for thirty years she had been to him as a sister. Boswell's jealousy was excited during the first period of his acquaintance, when Goldsmith one night went home with Johnson, crying "I go to Miss Williams"—a phrase which implied admission to an intimacy from which Boswell was as yet excluded. Boswell soon obtained the coveted privilege, and testifies to the respect with which Johnson always treated the inmates of his family. Before leaving her to dine with Boswell at the hotel, he asked her what little delicacy should be sent to her from the tavern. Poor Miss Williams, however, was peevish, and, according to Hawkins, had been known to drive Johnson out of the room by her reproaches, and Boswell's delicacy was shocked by the supposition that she tested the fulness of cups of tea, by putting her finger inside. We are

glad to know that this was a false impression, and, in fact, Miss Williams, however unfortunate in temper and circumstances, seems to have been a lady by manners and education.

The next inmate of this queer household was Robert Levett, a man who had been a waiter at a coffee-house in Paris frequented by surgeons. They had enabled him to pick up some of their art, and he set up as an "obscure practiser in physic amongst the lower people" in London. He took from them such fees as he could get, including provisions, sometimes, unfortunately for him, of the potable kind. He was once entrapped into a queer marriage, and Johnson had to arrange a separation from his wife. Johnson, it seems, had a good opinion of his medical skill, and more or less employed his services in that capacity. He attended his patron at his breakfast; breakfasting, said Percy, "on the crust of a roll, which Johnson threw to him after tearing out the crumb." The phrase, it is said, goes too far; Johnson always took pains that Levett should be treated rather as a friend than as a dependant.

Besides these humble friends, there was a Mrs. Desmoulins, the daughter of a Lichfield physician. Johnson had had some quarrel with the father in his youth for revealing a confession of the mental disease which tortured him from early years. He supported Mrs. Desmoulins none the less, giving house-room to her and her daughter, and making her an allowance of half-a-guinea a week, a sum equal to a twelfth part of his pension. Francis Barber has already been mentioned, and we have a dim vision of a Miss Carmichael, who completed what he facetiously called his "seraglio." It was anything but a happy family. He summed up their relations in a letter

to Mrs. Thrale. "Williams," he says, "hates everybody ; Levett hates Desmoulins, and does not love Williams ; Desmoulins hates them both ; Poll (Miss Carmichael) loves none of them." Frank Barber complained of Miss Williams's authority, and Miss Williams of Frank's insubordination. Intruders who had taken refuge under his roof, brought their children there in his absence, and grumbled if their dinners were ill-dressed. The old man bore it all, relieving himself by an occasional growl, but reproaching any who ventured to join in the growl for their indifference to the sufferings of poverty. Levett died in January, 1782 ; Miss Williams died, after a lingering illness, in 1783, and Johnson grieved in solitude for the loss of his testy companions. A poem, composed upon Levett's death, records his feelings in language which wants the refinement of Goldsmith or the intensity of Cowper's pathos, but which is yet so sincere and tender as to be more impressive than far more elegant compositions. It will be a fitting close to this brief indication of one side of Johnson's character, too easily overlooked in Boswell's pages, to quote part of what Thackeray truly calls the "sacred verses" upon Levett :—

Well tried through many a varying year
See Levett to the grave descend,
Officious, innocent, sincere,
Of every friendless name the friend.

In misery's darkest cavern known,
His ready help was ever nigh ;
Where hopeless anguish pour'd his groan,
And lonely want retired to die.

No summons mock'd by dull delay,
No petty gains disdain'd by pride ;
The modest wants of every day,
The toil of every day supplied.

His virtues walk'd their narrow round,
Nor made a pause, nor left a void ;
And sure the eternal Master found
His single talent well employ'd.

The busy day, the peaceful night,
Unfelt, uncounted, glided by ;
His frame was firm, his eye was bright,
Though now his eightieth year was nigh.

Then, with no throbs of fiery pain,
No cold gradations of decay,
Death broke at once the vital chain,
And freed his soul the easiest way.

The last stanza smells somewhat of the country tombstone ; but to read the whole and to realize the deep, manly sentiment which it implies, without tears in one's eyes is to me at least impossible.

There is one little touch which may be added before we proceed to the closing years of this tender-hearted old moralist. Johnson loved little children, calling them "little dears," and cramming them with sweetmeats, though we regret to add that he once snubbed a little child rather severely for a want of acquaintance with the *Pilgrim's Progress*. His cat, Hodge, should be famous amongst the lovers of the race. He used to go out and buy oysters for Hodge, that the servants might not take a dislike to the animal from having to serve it themselves. He reproached his wife for beating a cat before the maid, lest she should give a precedent for cruelty. Boswell, who cherished an antipathy to cats, suffered at seeing Hodge scrambling up Johnson's breast, whilst he smiled and rubbed the beast's back and pulled its tail. Boszy remarked that he was a fine cat. "Why, yes, sir," said Johnson ; "but I have had cats whom I liked better

than this," and then, lest Hodge should be put out of countenance, he added, "but he is a very fine cat, a very fine cat indeed." He told Langton once of a young gentleman who, when last heard of, was "running about town shooting cats; but," he murmured in a kindly reverie, "Hodge shan't be shot; no, no, Hodge shall not be shot!" Once, when Johnson was staying at a house in Wales, the gardener brought in a hare which had been caught in the potatoes. The order was given to take it to the cook. Johnson asked to have it placed in his arms. He took it to the window and let it go, shouting to increase its speed. When his host complained that he had perhaps spoilt the dinner, Johnson replied by insisting that the rights of hospitality included an animal which had thus placed itself under the protection of the master of the garden.

We must proceed, however, to a more serious event. The year 1781 brought with it a catastrophe which profoundly affected the brief remainder of Johnson's life. Mr. Thrale, whose health had been shaken by fits, died suddenly on the 4th of April. The ultimate consequence was Johnson's loss of the second home, in which he had so often found refuge from melancholy, alleviation of physical suffering, and pleasure in social converse. The change did not follow at once, but as the catastrophe of a little social drama, upon the rights and wrongs of which a good deal of controversy has been expended.

Johnson was deeply affected by the loss of a friend whose face, as he said, "had never been turned upon him through fifteen years but with respect and benignity." He wrote solemn and affecting letters to the widow, and busied himself strenuously in her service. Thrale had made him one of his executors, leaving him a small

legacy; and Johnson took, it seems, a rather simple-minded pleasure in dealing with important commercial affairs and signing cheques for large sums of money. The old man of letters, to whom three hundred a year had been superabundant wealth, was amused at finding himself in the position of a man of business, regulating what was then regarded as a princely fortune. The brewery was sold after a time, and Johnson bustled about with an ink-horn and pen in his button-hole. When asked what was the value of the property, he replied magniloquently, "We are not here to sell a parcel of boilers and vats, but the potentiality of growing rich beyond the dreams of avarice." The brewery was in fact sold to Barclay, Perkins, and Co. for the sum of 135,000*l.*, and some years afterwards it was the largest concern of the kind in the world.

The first effect of the change was probably rather to tighten than to relax the bond of union with the Thrale family. During the winter of 1781-2, Johnson's infirmities were growing upon him. In the beginning of 1782 he was suffering from an illness which excited serious apprehensions, and he went to Mrs. Thrale's, as the only house where he could use "all the freedom that sickness requires." She nursed him carefully, and expressed her feelings with characteristic vehemence in a curious journal which he had encouraged her to keep. It records her opinions about her affairs and her family, with a frankness remarkable even in writing intended for no eye but her own. "Here is Mr. Johnson very ill," she writes on the 1st of February; . . . "What shall we do for him? If I lose *him*, I am more than undone—friend, father, guardian, confidant! God give me health and patience! What shall I do?" There is no reason to

doubt the sincerity of these sentiments, though they seem to represent a mood of excitement. They show that for ten months after Thrale's death Mrs. Thrale was keenly sensitive to the value of Johnson's friendship.

A change, however, was approaching. Towards the end of 1780 Mrs. Thrale had made the acquaintance of an Italian musician named Piozzi, a man of amiable and honourable character, making an independent income by his profession, but to the eyes of most people rather inoffensive than specially attractive. The friendship between Mrs. Thrale and Piozzi rapidly became closer, and by the end of 1781 she was on very intimate terms with the gentleman whom she calls "my Piozzi." He had been making a professional trip to the Continent during part of the period since her husband's death, and upon his return in November, Johnson congratulated her upon having two friends who loved her, in terms which suggest no existing feeling of jealousy. During 1782 the mutual affection of the lady and the musician became stronger, and in the autumn they had avowed it to each other, and were discussing the question of marriage.

No one who has had some experience of life will be inclined to condemn Mrs. Thrale for her passion. Rather the capacity for a passion not excited by an intrinsically unworthy object should increase our esteem for her. Her marriage with Thrale had been, as has been said, one of convenience; and, though she bore him many children and did her duty faithfully, she never loved him. Towards the end of his life he had made her jealous by very marked attentions to the pretty and sentimental Sophy Streatfield, which once caused a scene at his table; and during the last two years his mind had been weakened, and his conduct had caused her anxiety and discomfort

It is not surprising that she should welcome the warm and simple devotion of her new lover, though she was of a ripe age and the mother of grown-up daughters.

It is, however, equally plain that an alliance with a foreign fiddler was certain to shock British respectability. It is the old story of the quarrel between Philistia and Bohemia. Nor was respectability without much to say for itself. Piozzi was a Catholic as well as a foreigner; to marry him was in all probability to break with daughters just growing into womanhood, whom it was obviously her first duty to protect. The marriage, therefore, might be regarded as not merely a revolt against conventional morality, but as leading to a desertion of country, religion, and family. Her children, her husband's friends, and her whole circle were certain to look upon the match with feelings of the strongest disapproval, and she admitted to herself that the objections were founded upon something more weighty than a fear of the world's censure.

Johnson, in particular, among whose virtues one cannot reckon a superiority to British prejudice, would inevitably consider the marriage as simply degrading. Foreseeing this, and wishing to avoid the pain of rejecting advice which she felt unable to accept, she refrained from retaining her "friend, father, and guardian" in the position of "confidant." Her situation in the summer of 1782 was therefore exceedingly trying. She was unhappy at home. Her children, she complains, did not love her; her servants "devoured" her; her friends censured her; and her expenses were excessive, whilst the loss of a lawsuit strained her resources. Johnson, sickly, suffering and descending into the gloom of approaching decay, was present like a charged thunder-cloud ready to burst at any moment, if she allowed him to approach the chief

subject of her thoughts. Though not in love with Mrs. Thrale, he had a very intelligible feeling of jealousy towards any one who threatened to distract her allegiance. Under such circumstances we might expect the state of things which Miss Burney described long afterwards (though with some confusion of dates). Mrs. Thrale, she says, was absent and agitated, restless in manner, and hurried in speech, forcing smiles, and averting her eyes from her friends; neglecting every one, including Johnson and excepting only Miss Burney herself, to whom the secret was confided, and the situation therefore explained. Gradually, according to Miss Burney, she became more petulant to Johnson than she was herself aware, gave palpable hints of being worried by his company, and finally excited his resentment and suspicion. In one or two utterances, though he doubtless felt the expedience of reserve, he intrusted his forebodings to Miss Burney, and declared that Streatham was lost to him for ever.

At last, in the end of August, the crisis came. Mrs. Thrale's lawsuit had gone against her. She thought it desirable to go abroad and save money. It had moreover been "long her dearest wish" to see Italy, with Piozzi for a guide. The one difficulty (as she says in her journal at the time), was that it seemed equally hard to part with Johnson or to take him with her till he had regained strength. At last, however she took courage to confide to him her plans for travel. To her extreme annoyance he fully approved of them. He advised her to go; anticipated her return in two or three years; and told her daughter that he should not accompany them, even if invited. No behaviour, it may be admitted, could be more provoking than this unforeseen reasonableness. To

nerve oneself to part with a friend, and to find the friend perfectly ready, and all your battery of argument thrown away is most vexatious. The poor man should have begged her to stay with him, or to take him with her; he should have made the scene which she professed to dread, but which would have been the best proof of her power. The only conclusion which could really have satisfied her—though she, in all probability, did not know it—would have been an outburst which would have justified a rupture, and allowed her to protest against his tyranny as she now proceeded to protest against his complacency.

Johnson wished to go to Italy two years later; and his present willingness to be left was probably caused by a growing sense of the dangers which threatened their friendship. Mrs. Thrale's anger appears in her journal. He had never really loved her, she declares; his affection for her had been interested, though even in her wrath she admits that he really loved her husband; he cared less for her conversation, which she had fancied necessary to his existence, than for her "roast beef and plumb pudden," which he now devours too "dirtily for endurance." She was fully resolved to go, and yet she could not bear that her going should fail to torture the friend whom for eighteen years she had loved and cherished so kindly.

No one has a right at once to insist upon the compliance of his friends, and to insist that it should be a painful compliance. Still Mrs. Thrale's petulant outburst was natural enough. It requires notice because her subsequent account of the rupture has given rise to attacks on Johnson's character. Her "Anecdotes," written in 1785, show that her real affection for Johnson was still coloured

by resentment for his conduct at this and a later period. They have an apologetic character which shows itself in a statement as to the origin of the quarrel, curiously different from the contemporary accounts in the diary. She says substantially, and the whole book is written so as to give probability to the assertion, that Johnson's bearishness and demands upon her indulgence had become intolerable, when he was no longer under restraint from her husband's presence. She therefore "took advantage" of her lost lawsuit and other troubles to leave London, and thus escape from his domestic tyranny. He no longer, as she adds, suffered from anything but "old age and general infirmity" (a tolerably wide exception!), and did not require her nursing. She therefore withdrew from the yoke to which she had contentedly submitted during her husband's life, but which was intolerable when her "coadjutor was no more."

Johnson's society was, we may easily believe, very trying to a widow in such a position; and it seems to be true that Thrale was better able than Mrs. Thrale to restrain his oddities, little as the lady shrunk at times from reasonable plain-speaking. But the later account involves something more than a bare suppression of the truth. The excuse about his health is, perhaps, the worst part of her case, because obviously insincere. Nobody could be more fully aware than Mrs. Thrale that Johnson's infirmities were rapidly gathering, and that another winter or two must in all probability be fatal to him. She knew, therefore, that he was never more in want of the care which, as she seems to imply, had saved him from the specific tendency to something like madness. She knew, in fact, that she was throwing him upon the care of his other friends, zealous and affectionate enough, it is true,

but yet unable to supply him with the domestic comforts of Streatham. She clearly felt that this was a real injury, inevitable it might be under the circumstances, but certainly not to be extenuated by the paltry evasion as to his improved health. So far from Johnson's health being now established, she had not dared to speak until his temporary recovery from a dangerous illness, which had provoked her at the time to the strongest expressions of anxious regret. She had (according to the diary) regarded a possible breaking of the yoke in the early part of 1782 as a terrible evil, which would "more than ruin her." Even when resolved to leave Streatham, her one great difficulty is the dread of parting with Johnson, and the pecuniary troubles are the solid and conclusive reason. In the later account the money question is the mere pretext; the desire to leave Johnson the true motive; and the long-cherished desire to see Italy with Piozzi is judiciously dropped out of notice altogether.

The truth is plain enough. Mrs. Thrale was torn by conflicting feelings. She still loved Johnson, and yet dreaded his certain disapproval of her strongest wishes. She respected him, but was resolved not to follow his advice. She wished to treat him with kindness and to be repaid with gratitude, and yet his presence and his affection were full of intolerable inconveniences. When an old friendship becomes a burden, the smaller infirmities of manner and temper to which we once submitted willingly, become intolerable. She had borne with Johnson's modes of eating and with his rough reproofs to herself and her friends during sixteen years of her married life; and for nearly a year of her widowhood she still clung to him as the wisest and kindest of monitors. His manners had undergone no spasmodic change. They became intolerable

when, for other reasons, she resented his possible interference, and wanted a very different guardian and confidant; and, therefore, she wished to part, and yet wished that the initiative should come from him.

The decision to leave Streatham was taken. Johnson parted with deep regret from the house; he read a chapter of the Testament in the library; he took leave of the church with a kiss; he composed a prayer commending the family to the protection of Heaven; and he did not forget to note in his journal the details of the last dinner of which he partook. This quaint observation may have been due to some valetudinary motive, or, more probably, to some odd freak of association. Once, when eating an omelette, he was deeply affected because it recalled his old friend Nugent. "Ah, my dear friend," he said "in an agony," "I shall never eat omelette with thee again!" And in the present case there is an obscure reference to some funeral connected in his mind with a meal. The unlucky entry has caused some ridicule, but need hardly convince us that his love of the family in which for so many years he had been an honoured and honour-giving inmate was, as Miss Seward amiably suggests, in great measure "kitchen-love."

No immediate rupture followed the abandonment of the Streatham establishment. Johnson spent some weeks at Brighton with Mrs. Thrale, during which a crisis was taking place, without his knowledge, in her relations to Piozzi. After vehement altercations with her daughters, whom she criticizes with great bitterness for their utter want of heart, she resolved to break with Piozzi for at least a time. Her plan was to go to Bath, and there to retrench her expenses, in the hopes of being able to recall her lover at some future period. Meanwhile he left her

and returned to Italy. After another winter in London, during which Johnson was still a frequent inmate of her house, she went to Bath with her daughters in April, 1783. A melancholy period followed for both the friends. Mrs. Thrale lost a younger daughter, and Johnson had a paralytic stroke in June. Death was sending preliminary warnings. A correspondence was kept up, which implies that the old terms were not ostensibly broken. Mrs. Thrale speaks tartly more than once; and Johnson's letters go into medical details with his customary plainness of speech, and he occasionally indulges in laments over the supposed change in her feelings. The gloom is thickening, and the old playful gallantry has died out. The old man evidently felt himself deserted, and suffered from the breaking-up of the asylum he had loved so well. The final catastrophe came in 1784, less than six months before Johnson's death.

After much suffering in mind and body, Mrs. Thrale had at last induced her daughters to consent to her marriage with Piozzi. She sent for him at once, and they were married in June, 1784. A painful correspondence followed. Mrs. Thrale announced her marriage in a friendly letter to Johnson, excusing her previous silence on the ground that discussion could only have caused them pain. The revelation, though Johnson could not have been quite unprepared, produced one of his bursts of fury. "Madam, if I interpret your letter rightly," wrote the old man, "you are ignominiously married. If it is yet undone, let us once more talk together. If you have abandoned your children and your religion, God forgive your wickedness! If you have forfeited your fame and your country, may your folly do no further mischief! If the last act is yet to do, I, who have loved you, esteemed

you, revered you, and served you—I, who long thought you the first of womankind—entreat that before your fate is irrevocable, I may once more see you! I was, I once was, madam, most truly yours, Sam. Johnson."

Mrs. Thrale replied with spirit and dignity to this cry of blind indignation, speaking of her husband with becoming pride, and resenting the unfortunate phrase about her loss of "fame." She ended by declining further intercourse till Johnson could change his opinion of Piozzi. Johnson admitted in his reply that he had no right to resent her conduct; expressed his gratitude for the kindness which had "soothed twenty years of a life radically wretched," and implored her ("superfluously," as she says) to induce Piozzi to settle in England. He then took leave of her with an expression of sad forebodings. Mrs. Thrale, now Mrs. Piozzi, says that she replied affectionately; but the letter is missing. The friendship was broken off, and during the brief remainder of Johnson's life, the Piozzis were absent from England.

Of her there is little more to be said. After passing some time in Italy, where she became a light of that wretched little Della Cruscan society of which some faint memory is preserved by Gifford's ridicule, now pretty nearly forgotten with its objects, she returned with her husband to England. Her anecdotes of Johnson, published soon after his death, had a success which, in spite of much ridicule, encouraged her to some further literary efforts of a sprightly but ephemeral kind. She lived happily with Piozzi, and never had cause to regret her marriage. She was reconciled to her daughters sufficiently to renew a friendly intercourse; but the elder ones set up a separate establishment. Piozzi died not long afterwards. She was still a vivacious old lady, who celebrated

her 80th birthday by a ball, and is supposed at that ripe age to have made an offer of marriage to a young actor. She died in May, 1821, leaving all that she could dispose of to a nephew of Piozzi's, who had been naturalised in England.

Meanwhile Johnson was rapidly approaching the grave. His old inmates, Levett and Miss Williams, had gone before him; Goldsmith and Garrick and Beauclerk had become memories of the past; and the gloom gathered thickly around him. The old man clung to life with pathetic earnestness. Though life had been often melancholy, he never affected to conceal the horror with which he regarded death. He frequently declared that death must be dreadful to every reasonable man. "Death, my dear, is very dreadful," he says simply in a letter to Lucy Porter in the last year of his life. Still later he shocked a pious friend by admitting that the fear oppressed him. Dr. Adams tried the ordinary consolation of the divine goodness, and went so far as to suggest that hell might not imply much positive suffering. Johnson's religious views were of a different colour. "I am afraid," he said, "I may be one of those who shall be damned." "What do you mean by damned?" asked Adams. Johnson replied passionately and loudly, "Sent to hell, sir, and punished everlastingly." Remonstrances only deepened his melancholy, and he silenced his friends by exclaiming in gloomy agitation, "I'll have no more on't!" Often in these last years he was heard muttering to himself the passionate complaint of Claudio, "Ah, but to die and go we know not whither!" At other times he was speaking of some lost friend, and saying, "Poor man—and then he died!" The peculiar horror of death, which seems to indicate a tinge of insanity, was combined with utter

fearlessness of pain. He called to the surgeons to cut deeper when performing a painful operation, and shortly before his death inflicted such wounds upon himself in hopes of obtaining relief as, very erroneously, to suggest the idea of suicide. Whilst his strength remained, he endeavoured to disperse melancholy by some of the old methods. In the winter of 1783-4 he got together the few surviving members of the old Ivy Lane Club, which had flourished when he was composing the *Dictionary*; but the old place of meeting had vanished, most of the original members were dead, and the gathering can have been but melancholy. He started another club at the Essex Head, whose members were to meet twice a week, with the modest fine of threepence for non-attendance. It appears to have included a rather "strange mixture" of people, and thereby to have given some scandal to Sir John Hawkins and even to Reynolds. They thought that his craving for society, increased by his loss of Streatham, was leading him to undignified concessions.

Amongst the members of the club, however, were such men as Horsley and Windham. Windham seems to have attracted more personal regard than most politicians, by a generous warmth of enthusiasm not too common in the class. In politics he was an ardent disciple of Burke's, whom he afterwards followed in his separation from the new Whigs. But, though adhering to the principles which Johnson detested, he knew, like his preceptor, how to win Johnson's warmest regard. He was the most eminent of the younger generation who now looked up to Johnson as a venerable relic from the past. Another was young Burke, that very priggish and silly young man as he seems to have been, whose loss, none the less, broke the tender heart of his father. Friendships, now more in-

interesting, were those with two of the most distinguished authoresses of the day. One of them was Hannah More, who was about this time coming to the conclusion that the talents which had gained her distinction in the literary and even in the dramatic world, should be consecrated to less secular employment. Her vivacity during the earlier years of their acquaintance exposed her to an occasional rebuff. "She does not gain upon me, sir; I think her empty-headed," was one of his remarks; and it was to her that he said, according to Mrs. Thrale, though Boswell reports a softened version of the remark, that she should "consider what her flattery was worth, before she choked him with it." More frequently, he seems to have repaid it in kind. "There was no name in poetry," he said, "which might not be glad to own her poem"—the *Bas Bleu*. Certainly Johnson did not stick at trifles in intercourse with his female friends. He was delighted, shortly before his death, to "gallant it about" with her at Oxford, and in serious moments showed a respectful regard for her merits. Hannah More, who thus sat at the feet of Johnson, encouraged the juvenile ambition of Macaulay, and did not die till the historian had grown into manhood and fame. The other friendship noticed was with Fanny Burney, who also lived to our own time. Johnson's affection for this daughter of his friend seems to have been amongst the tenderest of his old age. When she was first introduced to him at the Thrales, she was overpowered and indeed had her head a little turned by flattery of the most agreeable kind that an author can receive. The "great literary Leviathan" showed himself to have the recently published *Evelina* at his fingers' ends. He quoted, and almost acted passages. "La! Polly!" he exclaimed in a

pert feminine accent, "only think! Miss has danced with a lord!" How many modern readers can assign its place to that quotation, or answer the question which poor Boswell asked in despair and amidst general ridicule for his ignorance, "What is a Brangton?" There is something pleasant in the enthusiasm with which men like Johnson and Burke welcomed the literary achievements of the young lady, whose first novels seem to have made a sensation almost as lively as that produced by Miss Brontë, and far superior to anything that fell to the lot of Miss Austen. Johnson seems always to have regarded her with personal affection. He had a tender interview with her shortly before his death; he begged her with solemn energy to remember him in her prayers; he apologized pathetically for being unable to see her, as his weakness increased; and sent her tender messages from his deathbed.

As the end drew near, Johnson accepted the inevitable like a man. After spending most of the latter months of 1784 in the country with the friends who, after the loss of the Thrales, could give him most domestic comfort, he came back to London to die. He made his will, and settled a few matters of business, and was pleased to be told that he would be buried in Westminster Abbey. He uttered a few words of solemn advice to those who came near him, and took affecting leave of his friends. Langton, so warmly loved, was in close attendance. Johnson said to him tenderly, *Te teneam moriens deficiente manu*. Windham broke from political occupations to sit by the dying man. Once Langton found Burke sitting by his bedside with three or four friends. "I am afraid," said Burke, "that so many of us must be oppressive to you." "No, sir, it is not so," replied Johnson, "and I must be

in a wretched state indeed when your company would not be a delight to me." "My dear sir," said Burke, with a breaking voice, "you have always been too good to me;" and parted from his old friend for the last time. Of Reynolds, he begged three things: to forgive a debt of thirty pounds, to read the Bible, and never to paint on Sundays. A few flashes of the old humour broke through. He said of a man who sat up with him: "Sir, the fellow's an idiot; he's as awkward as a turnspit when first put into the wheel, and as sleepy as a dormouse," His last recorded words were to a young lady who had begged for his blessing: "God bless you, my dear." The same day, December 13th, 1784, he gradually sank and died peacefully. He was laid in the Abbey, and the playful prediction which he made to Goldsmith has been amply fulfilled:—

Forsitan et nostrum nomen miscebitur istis.

The names of many greater writers are inscribed upon the walls of Westminster Abbey; but scarcely any one lies there whose heart was more acutely responsive during life to the deepest and tenderest of human emotions. In visiting that strange gathering of departed heroes and statesmen and philanthropists and poets, there are many whose words and deeds have a far greater influence upon our imaginations; but there are very few whom, when all has been said, we can love so heartily as Samuel Johnson.

CHAPTER VI.

JOHNSON'S WRITINGS.

It remains to speak of Johnson's position in literature. For reasons sufficiently obvious, few men whose lives have been devoted to letters for an equal period, have left behind them such scanty and inadequate remains. Johnson, as we have seen, worked only under the pressure of circumstances; a very small proportion of his latter life was devoted to literary employment. The working hours of his earlier years were spent for the most part in productions which can hardly be called literary. Seven years were devoted to the *Dictionary*, which, whatever its merits, could be a book only in the material sense of the word, and was of course destined to be soon superseded. Much of his hack-work has doubtless passed into oblivion, and though the ordinary relic-worship has gathered together fragments enough to fill twelve decent octavo volumes (to which may be added the two volumes of parliamentary reports), the part which can be called alive may be compressed into very moderate compass. Johnson may be considered as a poet, an essayist, a pamphleteer, a traveller, a critic, and a biographer. Among his poems, the two imitations of Juvenal, especially the *Vanity of Human Wishes*, and a minor fragment or two, probably deserve more respect than would be conceded

to them by adherents of modern schools. His most ambitious work, *Irene*, can be read by men in whom a sense of duty has been abnormally developed. Among the two hundred and odd essays of the *Rambler*, there is a fair proportion which will deserve, but will hardly obtain, respectful attention. *Rasselas*, one of the philosophical tales popular in the last century, gives the essence of much of the *Rambler* in a different form, and to these may be added the essay upon Soame Jenyns, which deals with the same absorbing question of human happiness. The political pamphlets, and the *Journey to the Hebrides*, have a certain historical interest; but are otherwise readable only in particular passages. Much of his criticism is pretty nearly obsolete; but the child of his old age—the *Lives of the Poets*—a book in which criticism and biography are combined, is an admirable performance in spite of serious defects. It is the work that best reflects his mind, and intelligent readers who have once made its acquaintance, will be apt to turn it into a familiar companion.

If it is easy to assign the causes which limited the quantity of Johnson's work, it is more curious to inquire what was the quality which once gained for it so much authority, and which now seems to have so far lost its savour. The peculiar style which is associated with Johnson's name must count for something in both processes. The mannerism is strongly marked, and of course offensive, for by "mannerism," as I understand the word, is meant the repetition of certain forms of language in obedience to blind habit and without reference to their propriety in the particular case. Johnson's sentences seem to be contorted as his gigantic limbs used to twitch, by a kind of mechanical spasmodic

action. The most obvious peculiarity is the tendency which he noticed himself, to "use too big words and too many of them." He had to explain to Miss Reynolds that the Shakesperian line,—

You must borrow me Garagantua's month,

had been applied to him because he used "big words, which require the mouth of a giant to pronounce them." It was not, however, the mere bigness of the words that distinguished his style, but a peculiar love of putting the abstract for the concrete, of using awkward inversions, and of balancing his sentences in a monotonous rhythm, which gives the appearance, as it sometimes corresponds to the reality, of elaborate logical discrimination. With all its faults the style has the merits of masculine directness. The inversions are not such as to complicate the construction. As Boswell remarks, he never uses a parenthesis; and his style, though ponderous and wearisome, is as transparent as the smarter snip-snap of Macaulay.

This singular mannerism appears in his earliest writings; it is most marked at the time of the *Rambler*; whilst in the *Lives of the Poets*, although I think that the trick of inversion has become commoner, the other peculiarities have been so far softened as (in my judgment, at least), to be inoffensive. It is perhaps needless to give examples of a tendency which marks almost every page of his writing. A passage or two from the *Rambler* may illustrate the quality of the style, and the oddity of the effect produced, when it is applied to topics of a trivial kind. The author of the *Rambler* is supposed to receive a remonstrance upon his excessive gravity from the lively Flirtilla, who wishes him to write in defence of

masquerades. Conscious of his own incapacity, he applies to a man of "high reputation in gay life;" who, on the fifth perusal of Flirtilla's letter breaks into a rapture, and declares that he is ready to devote himself to her service. Here is part of the apostrophe put into the mouth of this brilliant rake. "Behold, Flirtilla, at thy feet a man grown gray in the study of those noble arts by which right and wrong may be confounded; by which reason may be blinded, when we have a mind to escape from her inspection, and caprice and appetite instated in uncontrolled command and boundless dominion! Such a casuist may surely engage with certainty of success in vindication of an entertainment which in an instant gives confidence to the timorous and kindles ardour in the cold, an entertainment where the vigilance of jealousy has so often been clouded, and the virgin is set free from the necessity of languishing in silence; where all the outworks of chastity are at once demolished; where the heart is laid open without a blush; where bashfulness may survive virtue, and no wish is crushed under the frown of modesty."

Here is another passage, in which Johnson is speaking upon a topic more within his proper province; and which contains sound sense under its weight of words. A man, he says, who reads a printed book, is often contented to be pleased without critical examination. "But," he adds, "if the same man be called to consider the merit of a production yet unpublished, he brings an imagination heated with objections to passages which he has never yet heard; he invokes all the powers of criticism, and stores his memory with Taste and Grace, Purity and Delicacy, Manners and Unties, sounds which having been once uttered by those that understood

them, have been since re-echoed without meaning, and kept up to the disturbance of the world by constant repercussion from one coxcomb to another. He considers himself as obliged to show by some proof of his abilities, that he is not consulted to no purpose, and therefore watches every opening for objection, and looks round for every opportunity to propose some specious alteration. Such opportunities a very small degree of sagacity will enable him to find, for in every work of imagination, the disposition of parts, the insertion of incidents, and use of decorations may be varied in a thousand ways with equal propriety; and, as in things nearly equal that will always seem best to every man which he himself produces, the critic, whose business is only to propose without the care of execution, can never want the satisfaction of believing that he has suggested very important improvements, nor the power of enforcing his advice by arguments, which, as they appear convincing to himself, either his kindness or his vanity will press obstinately and importunately, without suspicion that he may possibly judge too hastily in favour of his own advice or inquiry whether the advantage of the new scheme be proportionate to the labour." We may still notice a "repercussion" of words from one coxcomb to another; though somehow the words have been changed or translated.

Johnson's style is characteristic of the individual and of the epoch. The preceding generation had exhibited the final triumph of common sense over the pedantry of a decaying scholasticism. The movements represented by Locke's philosophy, by the rationalizing school in theology, and by the so-called classicism of Pope and his followers, are different phases of the same impulse. The quality

valued above all others in philosophy, literature, and art was clear, bright, common sense. To expel the mystery which had served as a cloak for charlatans was the great aim of the time, and the method was to appeal from the professors of exploded technicalities to the judgment of cultivated men of the world. Berkeley places his Utopia in happy climes, —

Where nature guides, and virtue rules,
Where men shall not impose for truth and sense
The pedantry of courts and schools.

Simplicity, clearness, directness are, therefore, the great virtues of thought and style. Berkeley, Addison, Pope, and Swift are the great models of such excellence in various departments of literature.

In the succeeding generation we become aware of a certain leaven of dissatisfaction with the æsthetic and intellectual code thus inherited. The supremacy of common sense, the superlative importance of clearness, is still fully acknowledged, but there is a growing undertone of dissent in form and substance. Attempts are made to restore philosophical conceptions assailed by Locke and his followers; the rationalism of the deistic or semi-deistic writers is declared to be superficial; their optimistic theories disregard the dark side of nature, and provide no sufficient utterance for the sadness caused by the contemplation of human suffering; and the polished monotony of Pope's verses begins to fall upon those who shall tread in his steps. Some daring sceptics are even inquiring whether he is a poet at all. And simultaneously, though Addison is still a kind of sacred model, the best prose writers are beginning to aim at a more complex structure of sentence, fitted for the expression of a wider range of thought and emotion.

Johnson, though no conscious revolutionist, shares this growing discontent. The *Spectator* is written in the language of the drawing-room and the coffee-house. Nothing is ever said which might not pass in conversation between a couple of "wits," with, at most, some graceful indulgence in passing moods of solemn or tender sentiment. Johnson, though devoted to society in his own way, was anything but a producer of small talk. Society meant to him an escape from the gloom which beset him whenever he was abandoned to his thoughts. Neither his education nor the manners acquired in Grub Street had qualified him to be an observer of those lighter foibles which were touched by Addison with so dexterous a hand. When he ventures upon such topics he flounders dreadfully, and rather reminds us of an artist who should attempt to paint miniatures with a mop. No man, indeed, took more of interest in what is called the science of human nature; and, when roused by the stimulus of argument, he could talk, as has been shown, with almost unrivalled vigour and point. But his favourite topics are the deeper springs of character, rather than superficial peculiarities; and his vigorous sayings are concentrated essence of strong sense and deep feeling, not dainty epigrams or graceful embodiments of delicate observation. Johnson was not, like some contemporary antiquarians, a systematic student of the English literature of the preceding centuries, but he had a strong affection for some of its chief masterpieces. Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* was, he declared, the only book which ever got him out of bed two hours sooner than he wished. Sir Thomas Browne was another congenial writer, who is supposed to have had some influence upon his style. He never seems to have directly imitated any one, though some nonsense has been talked about his

"forming a style;" but it is probable that he felt a closer affinity to those old scholars, with their elaborate and ornate language and their deep and solemn tone of sentiment, than to the brilliant but comparatively superficial writers of Queen Anne's time. He was, one may say, a scholar of the old type, forced by circumstances upon the world, but always retaining a sympathy for the scholar's life and temper. Accordingly, his style acquired something of the old elaboration, though the attempt to conform to the canons of a later age renders the structure disagreeably monotonous. His tendency to pomposity is not redeemed by the *naïveté* and spontaneity of his masters.

The inferiority of Johnson's written to his spoken utterances is indicative of his divided life. There are moments at which his writing takes the terse, vigorous tone of his talk. In his letters, such as those to Chesterfield and Macpherson and in occasional passages of his pamphlets, we see that he could be pithy enough when he chose to descend from his Latinized abstractions to good concrete English; but that is only when he becomes excited. His face when in repose, we are told, appeared to be almost imbecile; he was constantly sunk in reveries, from which he was only roused by a challenge to conversation. In his writings, for the most part, we seem to be listening to the reverie rather than the talk, we are overhearing a soliloquy in his study, not a vigorous discussion over the twentieth cup of tea; he is not fairly put upon his mettle, and is content to expound without enforcing. We seem to see a man, heavy-eyed, ponderous in his gestures, like some huge mechanism which grinds out a ponderous tissue of verbiage as heavy as it is certainly solid.

The substance corresponds to the style. Johnson has

something in common with the fashionable pessimism of modern times. No sentimentalist of to-day could be more convinced that life is in the main miserable. It was his favourite theory, according to Mrs. Thrale, that all human action was prompted by the "vacuity of life." Men act solely in the hope of escaping from themselves. Evil, as a follower of Schopenhauer would assert, is the positive, and good merely the negative of evil. All desire is at bottom an attempt to escape from pain. The doctrine neither resulted from, nor generated, a philosophical theory in Johnson's case, and was in the main a generalization of his own experience. Not the less, the aim of most of his writing is to express this sentiment in one form or other. He differs, indeed, from most modern sentimentalists, in having the most hearty contempt for useless whining. If he dwells upon human misery, it is because he feels that it is as futile to join with the optimist in ignoring, as with the pessimist in howling over the evil. We are in a sad world, full of pain, but we have to make the best of it. Stubborn patience and hard work are the sole remedies, or rather the sole means of temporary escape. Much of the *Rambler* is occupied with variations upon this theme, and expresses the kind of dogged resolution with which he would have us plod through this weary world. Take for example this passage:—"The controversy about the reality of external evils is now at an end. That life has many miseries, and that those miseries are sometimes at least equal to all the powers of fortitude is now universally confessed; and, therefore, it is useful to consider not only how we may escape them, but by what means those which either the accidents of affairs or the infirmities of nature must bring upon us may be mitigated and

lightened, and how we may make those hours less wretched which the condition of our present existence will not allow to be very happy.

"The cure for the greatest part of human miseries is not radical, but palliative. Infelicity is involved in corporeal nature, and interwoven with our being; all attempts, therefore, to decline it wholly are useless and vain; the armies of pain send their arrows against us on every side, the choice is only between those which are more or less sharp, or tinged with poison of greater or less malignity; and the strongest armour which reason can supply will only blunt their points, but cannot repel them.

"The great remedy which Heaven has put in our hands is patience, by which, though we cannot lessen the torments of the body, we can in a great measure preserve the peace of the mind, and shall suffer only the natural and genuine force of an evil, without heightening its acrimony or prolonging its effects."

It is hardly desirable for a moralist to aim at originality in his precepts. We must be content if he enforces old truths in such a manner as to convince us of the depth and sincerity of his feeling. Johnson, it must be confessed, rather abuses the moralist's privilege of being commonplace. He descants not unfrequently upon propositions so trite that even the most earnest enforcement can give them little interest. With all drawbacks, however, the moralizing is the best part of the *Rambler*. Many of the papers follow the precedent set by Addison in the *Spectator*, but without Addison's felicity. Like Addison, he indulges in allegory, which, in his hands, becomes unendurably frigid and clumsy; he tries light social satire, and is fain to confess that we can spy a beard under the muffler of his feminine characters; he

treats us to criticism which, like Addison's, goes upon exploded principles, but unlike Addison's, is apt to be almost wilfully outrageous. His odd remarks upon Milton's versification are the worst example of this weakness. The result is what one might expect from the attempt of a writer without an ear to sit in judgment upon the greatest master of harmony in the language.

These defects have consigned the *Rambler* to the dustiest shelves of libraries, and account for the wonder expressed by such a critic as M. Taine at the English love of Johnson. Certainly if that love were nourished, as he seems to fancy, by assiduous study of the *Rambler*, it would be a curious phenomenon. And yet with all its faults, the reader who can plod through its pages will at least feel respect for the author. It is not unworthy of the man whose great lesson is "clear your mind of cant;"¹ who felt most deeply the misery of the world, but from the bottom of his heart despised querulous and sentimental complaints on one side, and optimist glasses upon the other. To him, as to some others of his temperament, the affectation of looking at the bright side of things seems to have presented itself as the bitterest of mockeries; and nothing would tempt him to let fine words pass themselves off for genuine sense. Here are some remarks upon the vanity in which some authors seek for consolation, which may illustrate this

¹ Of this well-known sentiment it may be said, as of some other familiar quotations, that its direct meaning has been slightly modified in use. The emphasis is changed. Johnson's words were "Clear your mind of cant. You may talk as other people do; you may say to a man, sir, I am your humble servant; you are not his most humble servant. . . You may talk in this manner; it is a mode of talking in society; but don't think foolishly."

love of realities and conclude our quotations from the *Rambler*.

"By such acts of voluntary delusion does every man endeavour to conceal his own unimportance from himself. It is long before we are convinced of the small proportion which every individual bears to the collective body of mankind; or learn how few can be interested in the fortune of any single man; how little vacancy is left in the world for any new object of attention; to how small extent the brightest blaze of merit can be spread amidst the mists of business and of folly; and how soon it is clouded by the intervention of other novelties. Not only the writer of books, but the commander of armies, and the deliverer of nations, will easily outlive all noisy and popular reputation: he may be celebrated for a time by the public voice, but his actions and his name will soon be considered as remote and unaffecting, and be rarely mentioned but by those whose alliance gives them some vanity to gratify by frequent commemoration. It seems not to be sufficiently considered how little renown can be admitted in the world. Mankind are kept perpetually busy by their fears or desires, and have not more leisure from their own affairs than to acquaint themselves with the accidents of the current day. Engaged in contriving some refuge from calamity, or in shortening their way to some new possession, they seldom suffer their thoughts to wander to the past or future; none but a few solitary students have leisure to inquire into the claims of ancient heroes or sages; and names which hoped to range over kingdoms and continents shrink at last into cloisters and colleges. Nor is it certain that even of these dark and narrow habitations, these last retreats of fame, the possession will be long kept. Of men devoted

to literature very few extend their views beyond some particular science, and the greater part seldom inquire, even in their own profession, for any authors but those whom the present mode of study happens to force upon their notice; they desire not to fill their minds with unfashionable knowledge, but contentedly resign to oblivion those books which they now find censured or neglected."

The most remarkable of Johnson's utterances upon his favourite topic of the Vanity of Human Wishes is the story of *Rasselas*. The plan of the book is simple, and recalls certain parts of Voltaire's simultaneous but incomparably more brilliant attack upon Optimism in *Candide*. There is supposed to be a happy valley in Abyssinia where the royal princes are confined in total seclusion, but with ample supplies for every conceivable want. Rasselas, who has been thus educated, becomes curious as to the outside world, and at last makes his escape with his sister, her attendant, and the ancient sage and poet, Imlac. Under Imlac's guidance they survey life and manners in various stations; they make the acquaintance of philosophers, statesmen, men of the world, and recluses; they discuss the results of their experience pretty much in the style of the *Rambler*; they agree to pronounce the sentence "Vanity of Vanities!" and finally, in a "conclusion where nothing is concluded," they resolve to return to the happy valley. The book is little more than a set of essays upon life, with just story enough to hold it together. It is wanting in those brilliant flashes of epigram, which illustrate Voltaire's pages so as to blind some readers to its real force of sentiment, and yet it leaves a peculiar and powerful impression upon the reader.

The general tone may be collected from a few passages

Here is a fragment, the conclusion of which is perhaps the most familiar of quotations from Johnson's writings. Imlac in narrating his life describes his attempts to become a poet.

"The business of a poet," said Imlac, "is to examine not the individual, but the species; to remark general properties and large appearances; he does not number the streaks of the tulip or describe the different shades in the verdure of the forest. He is to exhibit in his portraits of nature such prominent and striking features as recall the original to every mind; and must neglect the minute discriminations which one may have remarked, and another have neglected for those characteristics which are alike obvious to vigilance and carelessness."

"But the knowledge of nature is only half the task of a poet; he must be acquainted likewise with all the modes of life. His character requires that he estimate the happiness and misery of every condition; observe the power of all the passions in all their combinations, and know the changes of the human mind as they are modified by various institutions, and accidental influences of climate or custom, from the sprightliness of infancy to the despondency of decrepitude. He must divest himself of the prejudices of his age or country; he must consider right and wrong in their abstracted and invariable state; he must disregard present laws and opinions, and rise to general and transcendental truths, which will always be the same; he must therefore content himself with the slow progress of his name; condemn the applause of his own time, and commit his claims to the justice of posterity. He must write as the interpreter of nature and the legislator of mankind, and consider himself as presiding over the thoughts and manners

of future generations, as a being superior to time and place.

“His labours are not yet at an end; he must know many languages and many sciences; and that his style may be worthy of his thoughts, must by incessant practice familiarize to himself every delicacy of speech and grace of harmony.”

Imlac now felt the enthusiastic fit and was proceeding to aggrandize his profession, when the prince cried out, “Enough, thou hast convinced me that no human being can ever be a poet.”

Indeed, Johnson’s conception of poetry is not the one which is now fashionable, and which would rather seem to imply that philosophical power and moral sensibility are so far disqualifications to the true poet.

Here, again, is a view of the superfine system of moral philosophy. A meeting of learned men is discussing the ever-recurring problem of happiness, and one of them speaks as follows :—

“The way to be happy is to live according to nature, in obedience to that universal and unalterable law with which every heart is originally impressed; which is not written on it by precept, but engraven by destiny, not instilled by education, but infused at our nativity. He that lives according to nature will suffer nothing from the delusions of hope, or importunities of desire; he will receive and reject with equability of temper, and act or suffer as the reason of things shall alternately prescribe. Other men may amuse themselves with subtle definitions or intricate ratiocinations. Let him learn to be wise by easier means: let him observe the hind of the forest, and the linnet of the grove; let him consider the life of

animals whose motions are regulated by instinct; they obey their guide and are happy.

"Let us, therefore, at length cease to dispute, and learn to live; throw away the incumbrance of precepts, which they who utter them with so much pride and pomp do not understand, and carry with us this simple and intelligible maxim, that deviation from nature is deviation from happiness."

The prince modestly inquires what is the precise meaning of the advice just given.

"When I find young men so humble and so docile," said the philosopher, "I can deny them no information which my studies have enabled me to afford. To live according to nature, is to act always with due regard to the fitness arising from the relations and qualities of causes and effects, to concur with the great and unchangeable scheme of universal felicity; to co-operate with the general disposition and tendency of the present system of things.

"The prince soon found that this was one of the sages, whom he should understand less as he heard him longer."

Here, finally, is a characteristic reflection upon the right mode of meeting sorrow.

"The state of a mind oppressed with a sudden calamity," said Imlac, "is like that of the fabulous inhabitants of the new created earth, who, when the first night came upon them, supposed that day would never return. When the clouds of sorrow gather over us, we see nothing beyond them, nor can imagine how they will be dispelled; yet a new day succeeded to the night, and sorrow is never long without a dawn of ease. But as they who restrain themselves from receiving comfort, do

as the savages would have done, had they put out their eyes when it was dark. Our minds, like our bodies, are in continual flux; something is hourly lost, and something acquired. To lose much at once is inconvenient to either, but while the vital powers remain uninjured, nature will find the means of reparation.

"Distance has the same effect on the mind as on the eye, and while we glide along the stream of time, whatever we leave behind us is always lessening, and that which we approach increasing in magnitude. Do not suffer life to stagnate; it will grow muddy for want of motion; commit yourself again to the current of the world; Pokuah will vanish by degrees; you will meet in your way some other favourite, or learn to diffuse yourself in general conversation."

In one respect *Rasselas* is curiously contrasted with *Candide*. Voltaire's story is aimed at the doctrine of theological optimism, and, whether that doctrine be well or ill understood, has therefore an openly sceptical tendency. Johnson, to whom nothing could be more abhorrent than an alliance with any assailant of orthodoxy, draws no inference from his pessimism. He is content to state the fact of human misery without perplexing himself with the resulting problem as to the final cause of human existence. If the question had been explicitly brought before him, he would, doubtless, have replied that the mystery was insoluble. To answer either in the sceptical or the optimistic sense was equally presumptuous. Johnson's religious beliefs in fact were not such as to suggest that kind of comfort which is to be obtained by explaining away the existence of evil. If he, too, would have said that in some sense all must be for the best in a world ruled by a perfect Creator, the sense must be one which

would allow of the eternal misery of indefinite multitudes of his creatures.

But, in truth, it was characteristic of Johnson to turn away his mind from such topics. He was interested in ethical speculations, but on the practical side, in the application to life, not in the philosophy on which it might be grounded. In that direction he could see nothing but a "milking of the bull"—a fruitless or rather a pernicious waste of intellect. An intense conviction of the supreme importance of a moral guidance in this difficult world, made him abhor any rash inquiries by which the basis of existing authority might be endangered.

This sentiment is involved in many of those prejudices which have been so much, and in some sense justifiably ridiculed. Man has been wretched and foolish since the race began, and will be till it ends; one chorus of lamentation has ever been rising, in countless dialects but with a single meaning; the plausible schemes of philosophers give no solution to the everlasting riddle; the nostrums of politicians touch only the surface of the deeply rooted evil; it is folly to be querulous, and as silly to fancy that men are growing worse, as that they are much better than they used to be. The evils under which we suffer are not skin-deep, to be eradicated by changing the old physicians for new quacks. What is to be done under such conditions, but to hold fast as vigorously as we can to the rules of life and faith which have served our ancestors, and which, whatever their justifications, are at least the only consolation, because they supply the only guidance through this labyrinth of troubles? Macaulay has ridiculed Johnson for what he takes to be the ludicrous inconsistency of his intense political prejudice, combined with his assertion of the indifference of all forms of

government. "If," says Macaulay, "the difference between two forms of government be not worth half a guinea, it is not easy to see how Whiggism can be viler than Toryism, or the Crown can have too little power." The answer is surely obvious. Whiggism is vile, according to the doctor's phrase, because Whiggism is a "negation of all principle;" it is in his view, not so much the preference of one form to another, as an attack upon the vital condition of all government. He called Burke a "bottomless Whig" in this sense, implying that Whiggism meant anarchy; and in the next generation a good many people were led, rightly or wrongly, to agree with him by the experience of the French revolution.

This dogged conservatism has both its value and its grotesque side. When Johnson came to write political pamphlets in his later years, and to deal with subjects little familiar to his mind, the results were grotesque enough. Loving authority, and holding one authority to be as good as another, he defended with uncompromising zeal the most preposterous and tyrannical measures. The pamphlets against the Wilkite agitators and the American rebels are little more than a huge "rhinoceros" snort of contempt against all who are fools enough or wicked enough to promote war and disturbance in order to change one form of authority for another. Here is a characteristic passage, giving his view of the value of such demonstrators:—

"The progress of a petition is well known. An ejected placeman goes down to his county or his borough, tells his friends of his inability to serve them and his constituents, of the corruption of the government. His friends readily understand that he who can get nothing, will have nothing to give. They agree to proclaim a meeting

Meat and drink are plentifully provided, a crowd is easily brought together, and those who think that they know the reason of the meeting undertake to tell those who know it not. Ale and clamour unite their powers; the crowd, condensed and heated, begins to ferment with the leaven of sedition. All see a thousand evils, though they cannot show them, and grow impatient for a remedy, though they know not what.

"A speech is then made by the Cicero of the day; he says much and suppresses more, and credit is equally given to what he tells and what he conceals. The petition is heard and universally approved. Those who are sober enough to write, add their names, and the rest would sign it if they could.

"Every man goes home and tells his neighbour of the glories of the day; how he was consulted, and what he advised; how he was invited into the great room, where his lordship caressed him by his name; how he was caressed by Sir Francis, Sir Joseph, and Sir George; how he ate turtle and venison, and drank unanimity to the three brothers.

"The poor loiterer, whose shop had confined him or whose wife had locked him up, hears the tale of luxury with envy, and at last inquires what was their petition. Of the petition nothing is remembered by the narrator, but that it spoke much of fears and apprehensions and something very alarming, but that he is sure it is against the government.

"The other is convinced that it must be right, and wishes he had been there, for he loves wine and venison, and resolves as long as he lives to be against the government.

"The petition is then handed from town to town, and from house to house; and wherever it comes, the inha-

bitants flock together that they may see that which must be sent to the king. Names are easily collected. One man signs because he hates the papists ; another because he has vowed destruction to the turnpikes ; one because it will vex the parson ; another because he owes his landlord nothing ; one because he is rich ; another because he is poor ; one to show that he is not afraid ; and another to show that he can write."

The only writing in which we see a distinct reflection of Johnson's talk is the *Lives of the Poets*. The excellence of that book is of the same kind as the excellence of his conversation. Johnson wrote it under pressure, and it has suffered from his characteristic indolence. Modern authors would fill as many pages as Johnson has filled lines, with the biographies of some of his heroes. By industriously sweeping together all the rubbish which is in any way connected with the great man, by elaborately discussing the possible significance of infinitesimal bits of evidence, and by disquisition upon general principles or the whole mass of contemporary literature, it is easy to swell volumes to any desired extent. The result is sometimes highly interesting and valuable, as it is sometimes a new contribution to the dust-heaps ; but in any case the design is something quite different from Johnson's. He has left much to be supplied and corrected by later scholars. His aim is simply to give a vigorous summary of the main facts of his heroes' lives, a pithy analysis of their character, and a short criticism of their productions. The strong sense which is everywhere displayed, the massive style, which is yet easier and less cumbersome than in his earlier work, and the uprightness and independence of the judgments, make the book agreeable even where we are most inclined to dissent from its conclusions.

The criticism is that of a school which has died out under the great revolution of modern taste. The booksellers decided that English poetry began for their purposes with Cowley, and Johnson has, therefore, nothing to say about some of the greatest names in our literature. The loss is little to be regretted, since the biographical part of earlier memoirs must have been scanty, and the criticism inappreciative. Johnson, it may be said, like most of his contemporaries, considered poetry almost exclusively from the didactic and logical point of view. He always inquires what is the moral of a work of art. If he does not precisely ask "what it proves," he pays excessive attention to the logical solidity and coherence of its sentiments. He condemns not only insincerity and affectation of feeling, but all such poetic imagery as does not correspond to the actual prosaic belief of the writer. For the purely musical effects of poetry he has little or no feeling, and allows little deviation from the alternate long and short syllables neatly bound in Pope's couplets.

To many readers this would imply that Johnson omits precisely the poetic element in poetry. I must be here content to say that in my opinion it implies rather a limitation than a fundamental error. Johnson errs in supposing that his logical tests are at all adequate; but it is, I think, a still greater error to assume that poetry has no connexion, because it has not this kind of connexion, with philosophy. His criticism has always a meaning, and in the case of works belonging to his own school a very sound meaning. When he is speaking of other poetry, we can only reply that his remarks may be true, but that they are not to the purpose.

The remarks on the poetry of Dryden, Addison, and Pope are generally excellent, and always give the genuine

expression of an independent judgment. Whoever thinks for himself, and says plainly what he thinks, has some merit as a critic. This, it is true, is about all that can be said for such criticism as that on *Lycidas*, which is a delicious example of the wrong way of applying strong sense to inappropriate topics. Nothing can be truer in a sense, and nothing less relevant.

“In this poem,” he says, “there is no nature, for there is no truth ; there is no art, for there is nothing new. Its form is that of a pastoral, easy, vulgar, and therefore disgusting ; whatever images it can supply are easily exhausted, and its inherent improbability always forces dissatisfaction on the mind. When Cowley tells of Hervey that they studied together, it is easy to suppose how much he must miss the companion of his labours and the partner of his discoveries ; but what image of tenderness can be excited by these lines?—

We drove afield, and both together heard
What time the gray fly winds her sultry horn,
Battening our flocks with the fresh dews of night.

We know that they never drove a-field and had no flocks to batten ; and though it be allowed that the representation may be allegorical, the true meaning is so uncertain and remote that it is never sought, because it cannot be known when it is found.

“Among the flocks and copses and flowers appear the heathen deities : Jove and Phœbus, Neptune and Æolus, with a long train of mythological imagery such as a college easily supplies. Nothing can less display knowledge or less exercise invention than to tell how a shepherd has lost his companion, and must now feed his flocks alone, without any judge of his skill in piping ; how one god

asks another god what has become of Lycidas, and neither god can tell. He who thus grieves will excite no sympathy ; he who thus praises will confer no honour."

This is of course utterly outrageous, and yet much of it is undeniably true. To explain why, in spite of truth, *Lycidas* is a wonderful poem, would be to go pretty deeply into the theory of poetic expression. Most critics prefer simply to shriek, being at any rate safe from the errors of independent judgment.

The general effect of the book, however, is not to be inferred from this or some other passages of antiquated and eccentric criticism. It is the shrewd sense everywhere cropping up which is really delightful. The keen remarks upon life and character, though, perhaps, rather too severe in tone, are worthy of a vigorous mind, stored with much experience of many classes, and braced by constant exercise in the conversational arena. Passages everywhere abound which, though a little more formal in expression, have the forcible touch of his best conversational sallies. Some of the prejudices, which are expressed more pithily in *Boswell*, are defended by a reasoned exposition in the *Lives*. Sentence is passed with the true judicial air ; and if he does not convince us of his complete impartiality, he at least bases his decisions upon solid and worthy grounds. It would be too much, for example, to expect that Johnson should sympathize with the grand republicanism of Milton, or pardon a man who defended the execution of the blessed Martyr. He failed, therefore, to satisfy the ardent admirers of the great poet. Yet his judgment is not harsh or ungenerous, but, at worst, the judgment of a man striving to be just, in spite of some inevitable want of sympathy.

The quality of Johnson's incidental remarks may be

inferred from one or two brief extracts. Here is an observation which Johnson must have had many chances of verifying. Speaking of Dryden's money difficulties, he says, "It is well known that he seldom lives frugally who lives by chance. Hope is always liberal, and they that trust her promises, make little scruple of revelling to-day on the profits of the morrow."

Here is another shrewd comment upon the compliments paid to Halifax, of whom Pope says in the character of Bufo,—

Fed with soft dedications all day long,
Horace and he went hand and hand in song.

"To charge all unmerited praise with the guilt of flattery, or to suppose that the encomiast always knows and feels the falsehoods of his assertions, is surely to discover great ignorance of human nature and of human life. In determinations depending not on rules, but on reference and comparison, judgment is always in some degree subject to affection. Very near to admiration is the wish to admire.

"Every man willingly gives value to the praise which he receives, and considers the sentence passed in his favour as the sentence of discernment. We admire in a friend that understanding that selected us for confidence; we admire more in a patron that bounty which, instead of scattering bounty indiscriminately, directed it to us; and if the patron be an author, those performances which gratitude forbids us to blame, affection will easily dispose us to exalt.

"To these prejudices, hardly culpable, interest adds a power always operating, though not always, because not willingly, perceived. The modesty of praise gradually

wears away ; and, perhaps, the pride of patronage may be in time so increased that modest praise will no longer please.

"Many a blandishment was practised upon Halifax, which he would never have known had he no other attractions than those of his poetry, of which a short time has withered the beauties. It would now be esteemed no honour by a contributor to the monthly bundles of verses, to be told that, in strains either familiar or solemn, he sings like Halifax."

I will venture to make a longer quotation from the life of Pope, which gives, I think, a good impression of his manner : -

"Of his social qualities, if an estimate be made from his letters, an opinion too favourable cannot easily be formed ; they exhibit a perpetual and unclouded effulgence of general benevolence and particular fondness. There is nothing but liberality, gratitude, constancy, and tenderness. It has been so long said as to be commonly believed, that the true characters of men may be found in their letters, and that he who writes to his friend lays his heart open before him.

"But the truth is, that such were the simple friendships of the Golden Age, and are now the friendships only of children. Very few can boast of hearts which they dare lay open to themselves, and of which, by whatever accident exposed, they do not shun a distinct and continued view ; and certainly what we hide from ourselves, we do not show to our friends. There is, indeed, no transaction which offers stronger temptations to fallacy and sophistication than epistolary intercourse

"In the eagerness of conversation, the first emotions of the mind often burst out before they are considered. In

the tumult of business, interest and passion have their genuine effect ; but a friendly letter is a calm and deliberate performance in the cool of leisure, in the stillness of solitude, and surely no man sits down by design to depreciate his own character.

“ Friendship has no tendency to secure veracity ; for by whom can a man so much wish to be thought better than he is, as by him whose kindness he desires to gain or keep ? Even in writing to the world there is less constraint ; the author is not confronted with his reader, and takes his chance of approbation among the different dispositions of mankind ; but a letter is addressed to a single mind, of which the prejudices and partialities are known, and must therefore please, if not by favouring them, by forbearing to oppose them. To charge those favourable representations which men give of their own minds, with the guilt of hypocritical falsehood, would show more severity than knowledge. The writer commonly believes himself. Almost every man’s thoughts while they are general are right, and most hearts are pure while temptation is away. It is easy to awaken generous sentiments in privacy ; to despise death when there is no danger ; to glow with benevolence when there is nothing to be given. While such ideas are formed they are felt, and self-love does not suspect the gleam of virtue to be the meteor of fancy.

“ If the letters of Pope are considered merely as compositions, they seem to be premeditated and artificial. It is one thing to write, because there is something which the mind wishes to discharge ; and another to solicit the imagination, because ceremony or vanity requires something to be written. Pope confesses his early letters to be vitiated with *affectation and ambition*. To know

whether he disentangles himself from these perversers of epistolary integrity, his book and his life must be set in comparison. One of his favourite topics is contempt of his own poetry. For this, if it had been real, he would deserve no commendation; and in this he was certainly not sincere, for his high value of himself was sufficiently observed; and of what could he be proud but of his poetry? He writes, he says, when 'he has just nothing else to do,' yet Swift complains that he was never at leisure for conversation, because he 'had always some poetical scheme in his head.' It was punctually required that his writing-box should be set upon his bed before he rose; and Lord Oxford's domestic related that, in the dreadful winter of '40, she was called from her bed by him four times in one night, to supply him with paper lest he should lose a thought.

"He pretends insensibility to censure and criticism, though it was observed by all who knew him that every pamphlet disturbed his quiet, and that his extreme irritability laid him open to perpetual vexation, but he wished to despise his critics, and therefore hoped he did despise them. As he happened to live in two reigns when the court paid little attention to poetry, he nursed in his mind a foolish disesteem of kings, and proclaims that 'he never sees courts.' Yet a little regard shown him by the Prince of Wales melted his obduracy; and he had not much to say when he was asked by his Royal Highness, 'How he could love a prince while he disliked kings.'"

Johnson's best poetry is the versified expression of the tone of sentiment with which we are already familiar. The *Vanity of Human Wishes* is, perhaps, the finest poem written since Pope's time and in Pope's manner, with the exception of Goldsmith's still finer performances.

He said, has not Goldsmith's
 delicate delicacy of sentiment. He
 is, and one feels that the
 at which is most congenial ;
 it makes itself felt through
 tolerance. Here is one of the
 illustrates the vanity of mili-

wards the warrior's pride,
 Swedish Charles decide ;
 soul of fire,
 and no labours tire ;
 extends his wide domain,
 treasure and of pain ;
 sceptres yield,
 up, he rushes to the field ;
 kings their powers combine,
 and one resign :
 ed, but spreads her charms in vain.
 "d," he cries, "till nought remain ;
 still Gothic standards fly,
 beneath the polar sky ?"
 as a military state,
 eve suspended wait ;
 acts the solitary coast,
 scales the realms of Frost.
 on her cold his course delay—
 cry, hide Pultowa's day !
 ere leaves his broken bands,
 moves in distant lands ;
 they supplicant to wait,
 pose and slaves debate—
 cease at length her error mend :
 ed empire mark his end ?
 ere give the fatal wound ?
 ere press him to the ground ?
 ere cast to a barren strand,
 ere and a diabolic hand ;

He left the name at which the world grew pale,
To point a moral and adorn a tale.

The concluding passage may also fitly conclude this survey of Johnson's writings. The sentiment is less gloomy than is usual, but it gives the answer which he would have given in his calmer moods to the perplexed riddle of life; and, in some form or other, it is, perhaps, the best or the only answer that can be given:—

Where, then, shall Hope and Fear their objects find?
Must dull suspense corrupt the stagnant mind?
Must helpless man, in ignorance sedate,
Roll dark'ning down the torrent of his fate?
Must no dislike alarm, no wishes rise?
No cries invoke the mercies of the skies?
Inquirer cease; petitions yet remain
Which Heaven may hear, nor deem religion vain;
Still raise for good the supplicating voice,
But leave to Heaven the measure and the choice
Safe in His power whose eyes discern afar
The secret ambush of a specious prayer.
Implore His aid, in His decisions rest,
Secure whate'er He gives — He gives the best.
Yet when the scene of sacred presence fires,
And strong devotion to the skies aspires,
Pour forth thy fervours for a healthful mind,
Obedient passions and a will resign'd;
For Love, which scarce collective men can fill;
For Patience, sovereign o'er transmuted ill;
For Faith, that panting for a happier seat,
Counts Death kind nature's signal of retreat.
These goods for man the laws of Heaven ordain,
These goods He grants who grants the power to gain,
With these Celestial Wisdom calms the mind,
And makes the happiness she does not find.

THE END.



English Men of Letters

EDITED BY JOHN MORLEY

GRAY





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GRAY

BY

EDMUND GOSSE, M.A.

CLARK LECTURER IN ENGLISH LITERATURE AT TRINITY
COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE

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PREFATORY NOTE.

As a biographical study, this little volume differs in one important respect from its predecessors in this series. Expansion, instead of compression, has had to be my method in treating the existing lives of Gray. Of these, none have hitherto been published except in connexion with some part of his works, and none has attempted to go at all into detail. Mitford's, which is the fullest, would occupy, in its purely biographical section, not more than thirty of these pages.

The materials I have used are chiefly taken from the following sources :—

I. The *Life and Letters of Gray*, edited by Mason in 1775. This work consists of a very meagre thread of biography connecting a collection of letters, which would be more valuable, if Mason had not tampered with them, altering, omitting, and re-dating at his own free will.

II. Mitford's *Life of Thomas Gray*, prefixed to the 1814 edition of the *Poems*. This is very valuable so far as it goes. The Rev. John Mitford was a young clergyman who was born ten years after the death of Gray, and who made it the business of his life to collect from such survivors as remembered Gray all the documents and anecdotes that he could secure. This is the life which was altered and enlarged, to be prefixed to the *Eton Gray*, in 1845.

III. Mitford's Edition of the *Works* of Gray, published in 4 vols., in 1836. This contained the genuine text of most of the letters printed by Mason, and a large number which now saw the light for the first time, addressed to Wharton, Chute, Nicholls, and others.

IV. Correspondence and Reminiscences of the Rev. Norton Nicholls, edited by Mitford, in 1843.

V. The *Correspondence of Gray and Mason*, to which are added other letters, not before printed, an exceedingly valuable collection, not widely enough known, which was published by Mitford in 1853.

VI. The *Works* of Gray, as edited in 2 vols., by Mathias, in 1814; this is the only publication in which the Pembroke MSS. have hitherto been made use of.

VII. *Souvenirs de C. V. de Bonstetten*, 1832.

VIII. The Correspondence of Horace Walpole.

IX. Gray's and Stonehewer's MSS., as preserved in Pembroke College, Cambridge.

X. MS. Notes and Letters by Gray, Cole, and others, in the British Museum.

By far the best account of Gray, not written by a personal friend, is the brief summary of his character and genius contributed by Mr. Matthew Arnold to "The English Poets."

No really good or tolerably full edition of Gray's *Works* is in existence. Neither his English nor his Latin Poems have been edited in any collection which is even approximately complete; and his Letters, although they are better given by Mitford than by Mason, are very far from being in a satisfactory condition. In many of them the date is wrongly printed; and some which bear no date, are found, by internal evidence to be incorrectly attributed by Mitford. No attempt has ever been made to collect

Gray's writings into one single publication. I am sorry to say that all my efforts to obtain a sight of Gray's unpublished letters and facetious poems, many of which were sold at Sotheby and Wilkinson's, on the 4th of August, 1854, have failed. On the other hand, the examination of the Pembroke MSS. has supplied me with a considerable amount of very exact and important biographical information which has never seen the light until now.

I have to express my warmest thanks to the Master and Fellows of Pembroke College, Cambridge, who permitted me to examine these invaluable MSS. ; to Mr. R. A. Neil, of Pembroke, and Mr. J. W. Clark, of Trinity, whose kindness in examining archives, and copying documents for me, has been great ; to the late Mr. R. S. Turner, who has placed his Gray MSS. at my disposal ; to Professor Sidney Colvin and Mr. Basil Champneys, who have given me the benefit of their advice on those points of art and architecture which are essential to a study of Gray ; and to Mr. Edward Scott, and Mr. Richard Garnett, for valuable assistance in the Library of the British Museum. For much help in forming an idea of the world in which Gray moved, I am indebted to Mr. Christopher Wordsworth's books on Cambridge in the eighteenth century.

March 1882.

To the above statement I may briefly add that in 1884 I had the pleasure of editing for Messrs. Macmillan and Co., the entire *Works of Gray*, in 4 volumes. In an appendix to this volume I have given a few biographical facts which have come to my knowledge since 1882.

Christmas 1886.

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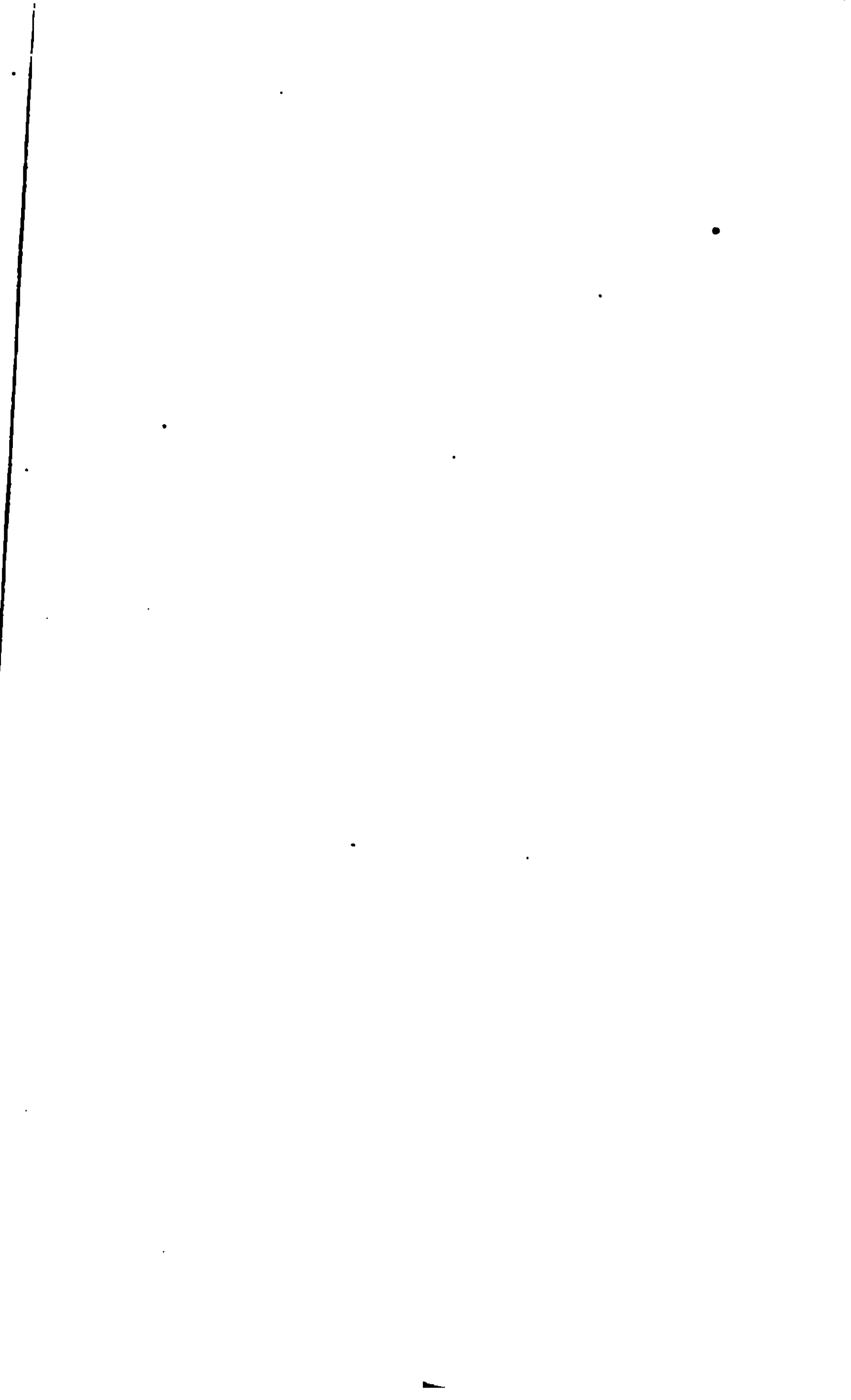
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GRAY



GRAY.

CHAPTER I.

CHILDHOOD AND EARLY COLLEGE LIFE.

THOMAS GRAY was born at his father's house in Cornhill, on the 26th of December, 1716. Of his ancestry nothing is known. Late in life, when he was a famous poet, Baron Gray of Gray in Forfarshire claimed him as a relation, but with characteristic serenity he put the suggestion from him. "I know no pretence," he said to Beattie, "that I have to the honour Lord Gray is pleased to do me ; but if his Lordship chooses to own me, it certainly is not my business to deny it." The only proof of his connexion with this ancient family is that he possessed a bloodstone seal, which had belonged to his father, engraved with Lord Gray's arms, gules a Lion rampant, within a bordure engrailed argent. These have been accepted at Pembroke College as the poet's arms, but as a matter of fact we may say that he sprang on both sides from the lower-middle classes. His paternal grandfather had been a successful merchant, and died leaving Philip, apparently his only son, a fortune of 10,000*l*. Through various vicissitudes this money passed, at length almost

reaching the poet's hands in no very much diminished quantity, for Philip Gray seems to have been as clever in business as he was extravagant. He was born July 27, 1676. Towards his thirtieth year he married Miss Dorothy Antrobus, a Buckinghamshire lady, about twenty years of age, who, with her sister Mary, a young woman three years her senior, kept a milliner's shop in the city. They belonged, however, to a genteel family, for the remaining sister, Anna, was the wife of a prosperous country lawyer, Mr. Jonathan Rogers, and the two brothers, Robert and Thomas Antrobus, were fellows of Cambridge colleges, and afterwards tutors at Eton. These five persons take a prominent place in the subsequent life of the poet, whereas he never mentions any of the Grays. His father had certainly one sister, Mrs. Oliffe, a woman of violent temper, who married a gentleman of Norfolk, and was well out of the way till after the death of Gray's mother, when she began to haunt him, and only died two or three months before he did. She seems to have resembled Philip Gray in character, for the poet, always singularly respectful and loyal to his other elderly relations, calls her "the Spawn of Cerberus upon the Dragon of Wantley"

Dorothy Gray was unfortunate in her married life; her husband was violent, jealous, and probably mad. Of her twelve children, Thomas was the only one whom she reared, but Mason is doubtless wrong in saying that the eleven who died were all suffocated by infantile convulsions. Mrs. Gray speaks in her "case" of the expense of providing "all manner of apparel for her children." Thomas, however, certainly would have died as an infant, but that his mother, finding him in a fit, opened a vein with her scissors, by that

means relieving the determination of blood to the brain. His father neglected him, and he was brought up by his mother and his aunt Mary. He also mentions with touching affection, in speaking of the death of a Mrs. Bonfoy in 1763, that "she taught me to pray." Home life at Cornhill was rendered miserable by the cruelties of the father, and it seems that the boy's uncle, Robert Antrobus, took him away to his own house at Burnham, in Bucks. This gentleman was a fellow of Peterhouse, as his younger brother Thomas was of King's College, Cambridge. With Robert the boy studied botany, and became learned, according to Horace Walpole, in the virtues of herbs and simples. Unfortunately this uncle died on January 23, 1729, at the age of fifty; there still exists a copy of *Waller's Poems*, in which Gray has written his own name, with this date: perhaps it was an heirloom of his uncle.

In one of Philip Gray's fits of extravagance he seems to have had a full length of his son painted, about this time, by the fashionable portrait-painter of the day, Jonathan Richardson the elder. This picture is now in the Fitzwilliam Museum at Cambridge. The head is good in colour and modelling; a broad pale brow, sharp nose and chin, large eyes, and a pert expression give a lively idea of the precocious and not very healthy young gentleman of thirteen. He is dressed in a blue satin coat, lined with pale shot silk, and crosses his stockinged legs so as to display dapper slippers of russet leather. His father, however, absolutely refused to educate him, and he was sent to Eton, about 1727, under the auspices of his uncles, and at the expense of his mother. On the 26th of April of the same year, a smart child of ten with the airs of a little dancing-master, a child who

was son of a prime minister, and had kissed the king's hand, entered the same school ; and some intellectual impulse brought them together directly in a friendship that was to last, with a short interval, until the death of one of them more than forty years afterwards.

It is not certain that Horace Walpole at once adopted that attitude of frivolous worship which he preserved towards Gray in later life. He was a brilliant little social meteor at Eton, and Gray was probably attracted first to him. Yet it was characteristic of the poet throughout life that he had always to be sought, and even at Eton his talents may have attracted Walpole's notice. At all events, they became fast friends, and fostered in one another intellectual pretensions of an alarming nature. Both were oppidans and not collegers, and therefore it is difficult to trace them minutely at Eton. But we know that they "never made an expedition against bargemen, or won a match at cricket," for this Walpole confesses ; but they wandered through the playing-fields at Eton tending a visionary flock, and "sighing out some pastoral name to the echo of the cascade under the bridge" which spans Chalvey Brook. An avenue of lime among the elms is still named the "Poet's Walk," and is connected by tradition with Gray. They were a pair of weakly little boys, and in these days of brisk athletic training would hardly be allowed to exist. Another amiable and gentle boy, still more ailing than themselves, was early drawn to them by sympathy : this was Richard West, a few months younger than Gray and older than Walpole, a son of the Richard West who was made Lord Chancellor of Ireland when he was only thirty-five, and who then immediately died ; his mother's father, dead before young Richard's birth, had been the famous Bishop Gilbert Bur-

net. A fourth friend was Thomas Ashton, who soon slips out of our history, but who survived until 1775.

These four boys formed a "quadruple alliance" of the warmest friendship. West seemed the genius among them; he was a nervous and precocious lad, who made verses in his sleep, cultivated not only a public Latin Muse, but also a private English one, and dazzled his companions by the ease and fluency of his pen. His poetical remains, to which we shall presently return, since they are intimately connected with the development of Gray's genius, are of sufficient merit to permit us to believe that had he lived he might have achieved a reputation among the minor poets of his age. Neither Shenstone nor Beattie had written anything so considerable when they reached the age at which West died. His character was extremely winning, and in his correspondence with Gray, as far as it has been preserved, we find him at first the more serious and the more affectionate friend. But the symptoms of his illness, which seem to have closely resembled those of Keats, destroyed the superficial sweetness of his nature, and towards the end we find Gray the more sober and the more manly of the two.

Besides the inner circle of Walpole, West, and Ashton, there was an outer ring of Eton friends, whose names have been preserved in connexion with Gray's. Among these was George Montagu, grand-nephew of the great Earl of Halifax; Stonebrower, a very firm and loyal friend, with whom Gray's intimacy deepened to the end of his life; Clarke, afterwards a fashionable physician at Epsom; and Jacob Bryant, the antiquary, whose place in class was next to Gray's through one term. With these he doubtless shared those delights of swimming, birds'-nesting, hoops and trap-ball, which he has described,

in ornate eighteenth-century fashion, in the famous stanza of his Eton Ode :—

Say, Father Thames, for thou hast seen
Full many a sprightly race,
Disporting on thy margent green,
The paths of pleasure trace ;
Who foremost now delights to cleave,
With pliant arm, thy glassy wave,
The captive linnet which enthrall ?
What idle progeny succeed
To chase the rolling circle's speed,
Or urge the flying ball ?

But we have every reason to believe that he was much more amply occupied in helping "grateful Science" to adore "her Henry's holy shade." Learning was still preferred to athletics at our public schools, and Gray was naturally drawn by temperament to study. It has always been understood that he versified at Eton, but the earliest lines of his which have hitherto been known are as late as 1736, when he had been nearly two years at Cambridge. I was, however, fortunate enough to find among the MSS. in Pembroke College a "play exercise at Eton," in the poet's handwriting, which had never been printed, and which is valuable as showing us the early ripeness of his scholarship. It is a theme, in seventy-three hexameter verses, commencing with the line—

Pendet Homo incertus gemini ad confinia mundi.

The normal mood of man is described as one of hesitation between the things of Heaven and the things of Earth ; he assumes that all nature is made for his enjoyment, but soon experience steps in and proves to him the contrary ; he endeavours to fathom the laws of nature,

but their scheme evades him, and he learns that his effort is a futile one. The proper study of mankind is man, and yet how narrow a theme! Man yearns for ever after superhuman power and accomplishment, only to discover the narrow scope of his possibilities, and he has at last to curb his ambition, and be contented with what God and nature have ordained. The thoughts are beyond a boy, though borrowed in the main from Horace and Pope; while the verse is still more remarkable, being singularly pure and sonorous, though studded, in boyish fashion, with numerous tags from Virgil. What is really noticeable about this early effusion, is the curious way in which it prefigures its author's maturer moral and elegiac manner; we see the writer's bias and the mode in which he will approach ethical questions, and we detect in this little "play-exercise" a shadow of the stately didactic reverie of the *Odes*. As this poem has never been described, I may be permitted to quote a few of the verses:—

Plurimus (hic error, demensque libido lacescit)
 In auperos cœlumque ruit, sedesque relinquit,
 Quas natura dedit proprias, jussitque tueri.
 Humani sortem generis pars altera lugat,
 Invidet armento, et campi sibi vindicat herbam.
 O quis me in pecoris fœlicia transferet arva,
 In loca pastorum deserta, atque otia dia?
 Car tuihi non Lyncisne oculis, vel odora ranum vis
 Additur, aut gressus cursu glomernare potestas?
 Aspice ubi, teneres dum texit aranea casses,
 Funditur in telam, et late per stamina vivit.
 Quid mihi non tactus eadem exquisita facultas
 Taurorumve tori solidi, pennæve volucrum.

In the face of such lines as these, and bearing in mind Walpole's assertion that "Gray never was a boy," we may

form a tolerably exact idea of the shy and studious lad, already a scholar and a moralist, moving somewhat gravely and precociously through the classes of that venerable college which has since adopted him as her typical child, and which now presents to each emerging pupil a handsome selection from the works of the Etonian *par excellence*, Thomas Gray.

In 1734, the quadruple alliance broke up. Gray, and probably Ashton, proceeded to Cambridge, where the former was for a short time a pensioner of Pembroke Hall, but went over, on the 3rd of July, still as a pensioner, to his uncle Antrobus' College, Peterhouse.¹ Walpole went up to London for the winter, and did not make his appearance at King's College, Cambridge, until March, 1735. West, meanwhile, had been isolated from his friends by being sent to Oxford, where he entered Christ Church much against his will. For a year the young undergraduates are absolutely lost to sight. If they wrote to one another, their letters are missing, and the correspondence of Walpole and of Gray with West begins in November 1735.

But in the early part of that year a very striking incident occurred in the Gray family, an incident that was perfectly unknown until, in 1807, a friend of Haslewood's happened to discover, in a volume of MS. law-cases, a case submitted by Mrs. Dorothy Gray to the eminent civilian John Audley, in February 1735. In

¹ The Master of Peterhouse has kindly copied for me, from the register of admissions at that college, this entry, hitherto inedited:—"Jul: 3^{tio}. 1734. Thomas Gray Middlesexiensis in scholâ publicâ Etonensi institutus, annosque natus 18 (petente Tutore suo) censetur admisus ad Mensam Pensionariorum sub Tutore et Fidejussore Mr^o. Birkett, sed ea lege ut brevi se sistat in collegio et examinadoribus se probet."

this extraordinary document the poet's mother states that for nearly thirty years, that is to say for the whole of her married life, she has received no support from her husband, but has depended entirely on the receipts of the shop kept by herself and her sister, moreover "almost providing everything for her son, whilst at Eton school, and now he is at Peter-House in Cambridge."

Notwithstanding which, almost ever since he (her husband) hath been married, he hath used her in the most inhuman manner, by beating, kicking, punching, and with the most vile and abusive language, that she hath been in the utmost fear and danger of her life, and hath been obliged this last year to quit her bed, and lie with her sister. This she was resolved, if possible, to bear; not to leave her shop of trade for the sake of her son, to be able to assist in the maintainance of him at the University, since his father won't.

Mrs. Gray goes on to state that her husband has an insane jealousy of all the world, and even of her brother Thomas Antrobus, and that he constantly threatens "to run himself to undo her, and his only son," having now gone so far as to give Mary Antrobus notice to quit the shop in Cornhill at Midsummer next. If he carries out this threat, Mrs. Gray says that she must go with her sister, to help her "in the said trade, for her own and her son's support." She asks legal counsel which way will be best "for her to conduct herself in this unhappy circumstance." Mr. Audley writes sympathetically from Doctor's Commons, but civilly and kindly tells her that she can find no protection in the English law.

This strange and tantalising document, the genuineness of which has never been disputed, is surrounded by difficulties to a biographer. The known wealth and

occasional extravagances of Philip Gray make it hard to understand why he should be so rapacious of his wife's little earnings, and at the same time so barbarous in his neglect of her and of his son. That there is not one word or hint of family troubles in Gray's copious correspondence is what we might expect from so proud and reticent a nature. But the gossipy Walpole must have known all this, and Mason need not have been so excessively discreet, when all concerned had long been dead. Perhaps Mrs. Gray exaggerated a little, and perhaps also the vileness of her husband's behaviour in 1735 made her forget that in earlier years they had lived on gentler terms. At all events, the money-scrivener is shown to have been miserly, violent, and, as I have before conjectured, probably half-insane. The interesting point in the whole story is Mrs. Gray's self-sacrifice for her son, a devotion which he in his turn repaid with passionate attachment, and remembered with tender effusion to the day of his death. He inherited from his mother his power of endurance, his quiet rectitude, his capacity for suffering in silence, and the singular tenacity of his affections.

Gray, Ashton and Horace Walpole were at Cambridge together as undergraduates from the spring of 1735 until the winter of 1738. They associated very much with one another, and Walpole shone rather less it would appear than at any other part of his life. The following extract of a letter from Walpole to West, dated November 9, 1735, is particularly valuable :—

Tydeus rose and set at Eton. He is only known here to be a scholar of King's. Orosmades and Almanzor are just the same ; that is, I am almost the only person they are acquainted with, and consequently the only person acquainted with their excel-

latter. Plato improves every day; so does my friendship with him. These three divide my whole time, though I believe you will guess there is no quadruple alliance, that is a happiness which I only enjoyed when you was at Eton.

The nick-name which gives us least difficulty here is that in which we are most interested. Orsmanthen was West's name for Gray, because he was such a chilly mortal, and worshipped the sun. West himself was known as Favonius. Tydous is very clearly Walpole himself, and Almanzor is probably Ashton. I would hazard the conjecture that Plato is Henry Coventry, a young man then making some stir in the University with certain semi-religious *Dialogues*. He was a friend of Ashton's, and produced on Horace Walpole a very startling impression, causing in that volatile creature for the first and only time an access of fervent piety, during which Horace actually went to read the Bible to the prisoners in the Castle gaol. Very soon this wore off, and Coventry himself became a free thinker, but Ashton remained serious, and taking orders very early, dropped out of the circle of friends. In all this the name of Gray is not mentioned, but one is justified in believing that he did not join the reading parties at the Castle.

Early in 1736 the three Cambridge undergraduates appeared in print simultaneously and for the first time in a folio collection of Latin *Hymenæals* on the marriage of Frederic, Prince of Wales. Of these effusions, Gray's copy of hexameters is by far the best, and was so recognized from the first. Mason has thought it necessary to make a curious apology for this poem, and says that Gray "ought to have been above prostituting his powers" in "adulatory verses of this kind." But if he had glanced through the lines again, of which he must have

been speaking from memory, Mason would have seen that they contain no more fulsome compliments than were absolutely needful on the occasion. The young poet is not thinking at all about their royal highnesses, but a great deal about his own fine language, and is very innocent of anything like adulation. The verses themselves do not show much progress; there is a fine passage at the end, but it is almost a cento from Ovid. One line, melancholy to relate, does not scan. In every way superior to the *Hymeneal* is *Luna Habitabilis*, a poem in nearly one hundred verses, written by desire of the College in 1737, and printed in the *Musæ Etonenses*. It is impossible to lay any stress on these official productions, mere exercises on a given text. At Pembroke, both in the library of the College, and in the Stonehewer MSS. at the master's lodge, I have examined a number of similar pieces, in prose and verse, copied in a round youthful handwriting, and signed "Gray." Among them a copy of elegiacs, on the 5th of November, struck me as particularly clever, and it might be well, as the body of Gray's works is so small, and his Latin verse so admirable, to include several of these in a complete edition of his writings. They do not, however, greatly concern us here.

As early as May 1736 it is curious to find the dulness of Cambridge already lying with a leaden weight on the nerves and energies of Gray, a youth scarcely in his twentieth year. In his letters to West he strikes exactly the same note that he harped upon ten years later to Wharton, twenty years later to Mason, thirty years later to Norton Nichols, and in his last months, with more shrill insistence than ever, to Bonstetten. The cloud sank early upon his spirits. He writes to West: "when

we meet it will be my greatest of pleasures to know what you do, what you read, and how you spend your time, and to tell you what I do not read, and how I do not, &c., for almost all *the employment of my hours may be best explained by negatives*; take my word and experience upon it, doing nothing is a most amusing business; and yet *neither something nor nothing gives me any pleasure*. When you have seen one of my days, you have seen a whole year of my life; they go round and round like the blind horse in the mill, only he has the satisfaction of fancying he makes a progress and gets some ground; my eyes are open enough to see the same dull prospect, and to know that having made four-and-twenty steps more, I shall be just where I was." This is the real Gray speaking to us for the first time, and after a few more playful phrases, he turns again, and gives us another phase of his character. "You need not doubt, therefore, of having a first row in the front box of my little heart, and I believe you are not in danger of being crowded there; it is asking you to an old play, indeed, but you will be candid enough to excuse the whole piece for the sake of a few tolerable lines." Many clever and delicate boys think it effective to pose as victims to melancholy, and the former of these passages would possess no importance if it were not for its relation to the poet's later expressions. He never henceforward habitually rose above this deadly dulness of the spirits. His melancholy was passive and under control, not acute and rebellious, like that of Cowper, but it was almost more enduring. It is probable that with judicious medical treatment it might have been removed, or so far relieved as to be harmless. But it was not the habit of men in the first half of the eighteenth century to take any rational care of their

health. Men who lived in the country and did not hunt, took no exercise at all. The constitution of the generation was suffering from the mad frolics of the preceding age, and almost everybody had a touch of gout or scurvy. Nothing was more frequent than for men, in apparently robust health, to break down suddenly, at all points, in early middle life. People were not in the least surprised when men like Garth and Fenton died of mere indolence, because they had become prematurely corpulent and could not be persuaded to get out of bed. Gay, Thomson, and Gray are illustrious examples of the neglect of all hygienic precaution among quiet middle-class people in the early decades of the century. Gray took no exercise whatever; Cole reports that he said at the end of his life that he had never thrown his leg across the back of a horse, and this was really a very extraordinary confession for a man to make in those days. But we shall have to return to the subject of Gray's melancholy, and we need not dwell upon it here, further than to note that it began at least with his undergraduate days. He was considered effeminate at college, but the only proof of this that is given to us is one with which the most robust modern reader must sympathise, namely that he drank tea for breakfast, while all the rest of the university, except Horace Walpole, drank beer.

The letter from which we have just quoted goes on to show that the idleness of his life existed only in his imagination. He was, in fact, at this time wandering at will along the less-trodden paths of Latin literature, and rapidly laying the foundation of his unequalled acquaintance with the classics. He is now reading Statius, he tells West, and he encloses a translation of about one hundred and ten lines from the sixth book of the *Thebaid*.

This is the first example of his English verse which has been preserved. It is very interesting, as showing already the happy instinct which led Gray to reject the mode of Pope in favour of the more massive and sonorous verse-system of Dryden. He treats the heroic couplet with great skill, but in close discipleship of the latter master in his *Fables*. To a trained ear, after much study of minor English verse written between 1720 and 1740, these couplets have almost an archaic sound, so thoroughly are they out of keeping with the glib, satiric poetry of the period. Pope was a splendid artificer of verse, but there was so much of pure intellect, and of personal temperament, in the conduct of his art, that he could not pass on his secret to his pupils, and in the hands of his direct imitators the heroic couplet lost every charm but that of mere sparkling progress. The verse of such people as Whitehead had become a simple voluntary upon knitting-needles. Gray saw the necessity of bringing back melody and volume to the heroic line, and very soon the practice of the day disgusted him, as we shall see, with the couplet altogether. For the present he was learning the principles of his art at the feet of Dryden. West was delighted with the translation, and compared Gray contending with Statius to Apollo wrestling with Hyacinth. In a less hyperbolical spirit, he pointed out, very justly, the excellent rendering of that peculiarly Statian phrase, *Summos auro mansueverat ungues*, by

And calm'd the terrors of his claws in gold.

We find from Walpole that Gray spent his vacations in August, 1736, at his uncle's house at Burnham, in Buckinghamshire; and here he was close to the scene of so many of his later experiences, the sylvan parish of Stoke-

Pogis. For the present, however, all we hear is that he is too lazy to go over to Eton, which the enthusiastic Walpole and West consider to be perfectly unpardonable. A year later he is again with his uncle at Burnham; and it is on this occasion that he discovers the since-famous beeches. He is writing to Horace Walpole, and he says :—

My Uncle is a great hunter in imagination; his dogs take up every chair in the house, so I am forced to stand at the present writing; and though the gout forbids him galloping after them in the field, yet he continues still to regale his ears and nose with their comfortable noise and stink. He holds me mighty cheap, I perceive, for walking when I should ride, and reading when I should hunt. My comfort amidst all this is, that I have at the distance of half a mile, through a green lane, a forest (the vulgar call it a common), all my own, at least, as good as so, for I spy no human thing in it but myself. It is a little chaos of mountains and precipices, mountains, it is true, that do not ascend much above the clouds, nor are the declivities quite so amazing as Dover Cliff; but just such bills as people who love their necks as well as I do may venture to climb, and crags that give the eye as much pleasure as if they were more dangerous. Both vale and hill are covered with most venerable beeches, and other very reverend vegetables, that, like most other ancient people, are always dreaming out their old stories to the winds. At the foot of one of these squats ME (*il penseroso*) and there I grow to the trunk for a whole morning. The timorous hare and sportive squirrel gambol around me like Adam in Paradise before he had an Eve; but I think he did not use to read Virgil, as I commonly do.

This is the first expression, as far as I am aware, of the modern feeling of the picturesque. We shall see that it became more and more a characteristic impulse with Gray as years went by. In this letter, too, we see that at the

age of twenty-one he had already not a little of that sprightly wit and variety of manner which make him one of the most delightful letter-writers in any literature.

At Burnham, in 1737, he made the acquaintance of a very interesting waif of the preceding century. Thomas Southerne, the once famous author of *Oroonoko* and *The Fatal Marriage*, the last survivor of the age of Dryden, was visiting a gentleman in the neighbourhood of Burnham, and was so much pleased with young Gray, that though he was seventy-seven years of age he often came over to the house of Mr. Antrobus to see him. Still oftener, without doubt, the young poet went to see the veteran, whose successes on the stage of the Restoration took him back fifty years to a society very different from that in which he now vegetated on the ample fortune which his tragedies still brought him in. Unhappily his memory was almost entirely gone, though he lived nine years more, and died of sheer old age on the borders of ninety; so that Gray's curiosity about Dryden and the other poets his friends was more provoked than gratified. However, Gray found him as agreeable an old man as could be, and liked "to look at him and think of *Isabella* and *Oroonoko*," those personages then still being typical of romantic disappointment and picturesque sensibility. About this time, moreover, we may just note in passing, died Matthew Green, whose posthumous poem of the *The Spleen* was to exercise a considerable influence over Gray, and to be one of the few contemporary poems which he was able fervidly to admire.

Lest, however, the boy should seem too serious and precocious, if we know him only by the scholarly letters to West, let us print here, for the first time, a note to his tutor, the Rev. George Birkett, Fellow of Peterhouse, a

note which throws an interesting light on his manners. The postmark of this letter, which has lately been discovered at Pembroke College, is October 8, the year, I think, 1736 :—

S^r,—As I shall stay only a fortnight longer in town, I'll beg you to give yourself the trouble of writing out my Bills, and sending 'em, that I may put myself out of your Debt, as soon as I come down : if Piazza should come to you, you'll be so good as to satisfie him : I protest, I forget what I owe him, but he is honest enough to tell you right. My Father and Mother desire me to send their compliments, and I beg you'd believe me

S^r, your most obed^t humble Serv^t

T. GRAY.

The amusing point is that the tutor seems to have flown into a rage at the pert tone of this epistle, and we have the rough draft of two replies on the fly-sheet. The first addresses him as “pretty Mr. Gray,” and is a moral box on the ear ; but this has been cancelled, as wrath gave way to discretion, and the final answer is very friendly, and states that the writer would do anything “for your father and your uncle, Mr. Antrobus (Thos.).” Signor Piazza was the Italian master to the University, and six months later we find Gray, and apparently Horace Walpole also, learning Italian “like any dragon.” The course of study habitual at the University was entirely out of sympathy with Gray's instinctive movements after knowledge. He complains bitterly of having to endure lectures daily and hourly, and of having to waste his time over mathematics, where his teacher was the celebrated Professor Nicholas Saunderson, whose masterly *Elements of Algebra*, afterwards the text-books of the University, were still known only by oral tradition. For such learning Gray had neither taste nor patience. “It is very pos-

sible," he writes to West, "that two and two make four, but I would not give four farthings to demonstrate this ever so clearly; and if these be the profits of life, give me the amusements of it." His account of the low condition of classic learning at Cambridge we must take with a grain of salt. As an undergraduate he would of course see nothing of the great lights of the University, now sinking beneath the horizon; such a shy lad as he would not be asked to share the conversation of Bentley, or Snape, or the venerable Master of Jesus. What does seem clear from his repeated denunciations of "that pretty collection of desolate animals" called Cambridge, is that classical taste was at a very low ebb among the junior fellows and the elder undergraduates. The age of the great Latinists had passed away; the Greek revival, which Gray did much to start, had not begun, and 1737 was certainly a dull year at the University. It seems that there were no Greek text-books for the use of schools until 1741, and the method of pronouncing that language was as depraved as possible. A few hackneyed extracts from Homer and Hesiod were all that a youth was required to have read in order to pass his examination. Plato and Aristotle were almost unknown, and Gray himself seems to have been the only person at Cambridge who attempted seriously to write Greek verse. It is not difficult to understand that when, with the third term of his second year, his small opportunities of classical reading were taken from him, and he saw himself descend into the Cimmerian darkness of undiluted mathematics, the heart of the young poet sank within him. In December 1736 there was an attempt at rebellion; he declined to take degrees, and announced his intention of quitting college, but as we hear no more of this, and as he stayed two

years longer at Cambridge, we may believe that this was overruled.

Meanwhile the leaden rod seemed to rule the fate of the quadruple alliance. West grew worse and worse, hopelessly entangled in consumptive symptoms. Walpole lost his mother in August of 1737, and after this was a kind of waif and stray until he finally left England in 1739. Gray, whether in Cambridge or London, reverts more and more constantly to his melancholy. "Low spirits are my true and faithful companions; they get up with me, go to bed with me, make journeys and returns as I do; nay, and pay visits, and will even affect to be jocose, and force a feeble laugh with me; but most commonly we sit together, and are the prettiest insipid company in the world. However, when you come," he writes to West, "I believe they must undergo the fate of all humble companions, and be discarded. Would I could turn them to the same use that you have done, and make an Apollo of them. If they could write such verses with me, not hartshorn, nor spirit of amber, nor all that furnishes the closet of the apothecary's wisdom, should persuade me to part with them." For West had been writing a touching eulogy *ad amicos*, in the manner of Tibullus, inspired by real feeling and a sad presentiment of the death that lay five years ahead. In reading these lines of Gray's, we hardly know whether most to admire the marvellous lightness and charm of the style, or to be concerned at such confession of want of spirits in a lad of twenty-one. His letters, however, when they could be wrung out of his apathy, were precious to poor West at Oxford; "I find no physic comparable to your letters: prescribe to me, dear Gray, as often and as much as you think proper," and the amiable young pedants proceed, as before, to the

analysis of Poseidippos, and Lucretius, and such like frivolous reading. One of West's letters contains a piece of highly practical advice. "Indulge, amabo te, plusquam soles, corporis exercitationibus," but bodily exercise was just what Gray declined to indulge in to the end of his life. He does not seem to have been even a walker; indoors he was a bookworm, and out-of doors a saunterer and a dreamer; nor was there ever, it would seem, a "good friend Matthew" to urge the too-pensive student out into the light of common life.

Certain interesting poetical exercises mark the close of Gray's undergraduate career. A Latin ode in Sapphics and a fragment in Alcaics were sent in June, 1738, to West, who had just left Oxford for the Inner Temple. The second of these, which is so brief that it may surely be quoted here,—

O lacrymarum fons, tenero sacros
Ducentium ortus ex animo; quater
Felix! in imo qui scatentem
Pectore te, pia Nympha, sensit,

has called forth high eulogy from scholars of every succeeding generation. It is in such tiny seed-pearl of song as this that we find the very quintessence of Gray's peculiar grace and delicacy. To July 1737 belongs a version into English heroics of a long passage from Propertius, beginning—

Now prostrate, Bacchus, at thy shrine I bend,

which I have not met with in print; and another piece from the same poet, beginning "Long as of youth," which occurs in all the editions of Gray, bears on the original MS. at Pembroke the date Dec. 1738. It

may be remarked that in the printed copies the two last lines,—

You whose young bosoms feel a nobler flame
Redeem what Crassus lost and vindicate his name,

have accidentally dropped out. In September 1738 Gray left Cambridge, and took up his abode in his father's house for six months, apparently with no definite plans regarding his own future career ; but out of this sleepy condition of mind he was suddenly waked by Horace Walpole's proposition that they should start together on the grand tour. The offer was a generous one. Walpole was to pay all Gray's expenses, but Gray was to be absolutely independent : there was no talk of the poet's accompanying his younger friend in any secondary capacity, and it is only fair to Horace Walpole to state that he seems to have acted in a thoroughly kind and gentlemanly spirit. What was still more remarkable was, that without letting Gray know, he made out his will before starting, and so arranged that had he died while abroad, Gray would have been his sole legatee. The frivolities of Horace Walpole have been dissected with the most cruel frankness ; it is surely only just to point out that in this instance he acted a very gracious and affectionate part. On the 29th of March, 1739, the two friends started from Dover.

CHAPTER II.

THE GRAND TOUR.

GRAY was only out of his native country once, but that single visit to the Continent lasted for nearly three years, and produced a very deep impression upon his character. It is difficult to realize what he would have become without this stimulus to the animal and external part of his nature. He was in danger of settling down in a species of moral inertia, of becoming dull and torpid, of spoiling a great poet to make a little pedant. The happy frivolities of France and Italy, though they were powerless over the deep springs of his being, stirred the surface of it, and made him bright and human. It is to be noticed that we hear nothing of his "true and faithful companion, melancholy," while he is away in the south; he was cheerfully occupied, taken out of himself, and serene in the gaiety of others. The two friends enjoyed a very rough passage from Dover to Calais, and on landing Gray anticipated Dr. Johnson by being surprised that the inhabitants of the country could speak French so well. He also discovered that they were all "Papishes," and briskly adapted himself to the custom of the land by attending high mass the next day, which happened to be Easter Monday. In the afternoon the companions set out through a snow-storm for Boulogne in a post-chaise, a con

veyance—not then imported into England—which filled the young men with hilarious amazement. Walpole, sensibly suggesting that there was no cause for hurry, refused to be driven express to Paris; and so they loitered very agreeably through Picardy, stopping at Montreuil, Abbeville, and Amiens. From the latter city Gray wrote an amusing account of his journey to his mother, containing a lively description of French scenery. “The country we have passed through hitherto has been flat, open, but agreeably diversified with villages, fields well cultivated, and little rivers. On every hillock is a windmill, a crucifix, or a Virgin Mary dressed in flowers and a sarcenet robe; one sees not many people or carriages on the road. Now and then indeed you meet a strolling friar, a countryman with his great muff, or a woman riding astride on a little ass, with short petticoats, and a great head-dress of blue wool.”

On the 9th of April, rather late on a Saturday evening, they rolled into Paris, and after a bewildering drive drew up at last at the lodgings which had been prepared for them, probably in or near the British Embassy, and found themselves warmly welcomed by Walpole's cousins, the Conways, and by Lord Holderness. These young men were already in the thick of the gay Parisian tumult, and introduced Walpole, and Gray also as his friend, to the best society. The very day after their arrival they dined at Lord Holderness's to meet the Abbé Prévôt-d'Exiles, author of that masterpiece of passion, *Manon Lescaut*, and now in his forty-second year. It is very much to be deplored that we do not possess in any form Gray's impressions of the illustrious Frenchmen with whom he came into habitual contact during the next two months. He merely mentions the famous comic actress, Mademoiselle Jeanne Quinault “la Cadette,” who was even

then, though in the flower of her years, coquettishly threatening to leave the stage, and who did actually retire, amid the regrets of a whole city, before Gray came back to England. She reminded the young Englishman of Mrs. Clive, the actress, but he says nothing of those famous Sunday suppers at which she presided, and at which all that was witty and brilliant in Paris was rehearsed or invented. These meetings, afterwards developed into the sessions of the *Société du Bout du Banc*, were then only in their infancy; yet there, from his corner unobserved, the little English poet must have keenly noted many celebrities of the hour, whose laurels were destined to wither when his were only beginning to sprout. There would be found the "most cruel of amateurs," the Comte de Caylus; Voisenon, still in the flush of his reputation; Moncrief, the lover of cats, with his strange dog-face; and there or elsewhere we know that Gray met and admired that prince of frivolous ingenuities, the redoubtable Marivaux. But of all this his letters tell us nothing, nothing even of the most curious of his friendships, that with Crébillon *fils*, who, according to Walpole, was their constant companion during their stay in Paris.

All the critics of Gray have found it necessary to excuse or explain away that remarkable statement of his, that "as the paradisaical pleasures of the Mahometans consist in playing upon the flute, *etc.*, be mine to read eternal new romances of Marivaux and Crébillon." Mason considered this very whimsical, and later editors have hoped that it meant nothing at all. But Gray was not a man to say what he did not mean, even in jest. Such a reasonable and unprejudiced mind as his may be credited with a meaning, however paradoxical the statement it

makes. It is quite certain, from various remarks scattered through his correspondence, that the literature of the French regency, the boudoir poems and novels of the alcove, gave him more pleasure than any other form of contemporary literature. He uses language, in speaking of Gresset, the author of *Vert-Vert*, which contrasts curiously with his coldness towards Sterne and Collins. But above all, he delighted in Crébillon ; hardly had he arrived in Paris, than he sent West the *Lettres de la Marquise M * * * au Comte de R * * **, which had been published in 1732, but which the success of *Tan-zai et Néardané* had pushed into a new edition. The younger Crébillon at this time was in his thirty-second year, discreet, confidential, the friend of every one, the best company in Paris ; half his time spent in wandering over the cheerful city that he loved so much, the other half given to literature in the company of that strange colossus, his father, the tragic poet, the writing-room of this odd couple being shared with a menagerie of cats and dogs and queer feathered folk. Always a serviceable creature, and perhaps even already possessed with something of that Anglomania which led him at last into a sort of morganatic marriage with British aristocracy, Crébillon evidently did all he could to make Walpole and Gray happy in Paris ; no chaperon could be more fitting than he to a young Englishman desirous of threading the mazes of that rose-coloured Parisian Arcadia which had survived the days of the Regency, and had not yet ceased to look on Louis XV. as the Celadon of its pastoral valleys. It was a charming world of fancy and caprice ; a world of milky clouds floating in an infinite azure, and bearing a mundane Venus to her throne on a Frenchified Cythera. And what strange figures were bound to the

golden car; generals, and abbés, and elderly academicians, laughing philosophers and weeping tragedians, a motley crew united in the universal *culte du Tendre*, gliding down a stream of elegance and cheerfulness and tolerance that was by no means wholly ignoble.

All this, but especially the elegance and the tolerance, made a deep impression upon the spirit of Gray. He came from a Puritan country; and was himself, like so many of our greatest men, essentially a puritan at heart; but he was too acute not to observe where English practice was unsatisfactory. Above all, he seems to have detected the English deficiency in style and grace; a deficiency then, in 1739, far more marked than it had been half a century earlier. He could not but contrast the young English squire, that engaging and florid creature, with the bright, sarcastic, sympathetic companion of his walks in Paris, not without reflecting that the healthier English lad was almost sure to develop into a terrible type of fox-hunting stupidity in middle life. He, for one, then, and to the end of his days, would cast in his lot with what was refined and ingenious, and would temper the robustness of his race with a little Gallic brightness. Moreover his taste for the novels of Marivaux and Crébillon, with their ingenious analysis of emotion, their odour of musk and ambergris, their affectation of artless innocence, and their quick parry of wit, was not without excuse, in a man framed as Gray was for the more brilliant exercises of literature, and forced to feed, in his own country, if he must read romances at all, on the coarse rubbish of Mrs. Behn, or Mrs. Manley. Curiously enough at that very moment, Samuel Richardson was preparing for the press that excellent narrative of *Pamela* which was destined to found a great modern school of fiction in England, a

school which was soon to sweep into contempt and oblivion all the "crébillonage-amarivaudé" which Gray delighted in, a contempt so general that one stray reader here or there can scarcely venture to confess that he still finds the *Hasard au coin du Feu* very pleasant and innocent reading. We shall have to refer once again to this subject, when we reach the humorous poems in which Gray introduced into English literature this rococo manner.

Gray became quite a little fop in Paris. He complains that the French tailor has covered him with silk and fringe, and has widened his figure with buckram, a yard on either side. His waistcoat and breeches are so tight that he can scarcely breathe ; he ties a vast solitaire around his neck, wears ruffles at his fingers' ends, and sticks his two arms into a muff. Thus made beautifully genteel he and Walpole rolled in their coach to the Comedy and the Opera, visited Versailles and the sights of Paris, attended installations and spectacles, and saw the best of all that was to be seen. Gray was absolutely delighted with his new existence ; " I could entertain myself this month," he wrote to West, " merely with the common streets and the people in them ;" and Walpole, who was good-nature itself during all this early part of the tour, insisted on sending Gray out in his coach to see all the collections of fine art, and other such sights as were not congenial to himself, since Horace Walpole had not yet learned to be a connoisseur. Gray occupied himself no less with music, and his letters to West contain some amusing criticisms of French opera. The performers, he says, " come in and sing sentiment in lamentable strains, neither air nor recitation ; only, to one's great joy, they were every now and then interrupted by a dance, or, to one's great sorrow, by a chorus that borders the stage from

one end to the other, and screams, past all power of simile to represent. . . . Imagine, I say, all this transacted by cracked voices, trilling divisions upon two notes-and-a-half, accompanied by an orchestra of humstrums, and a whole house more attentive than if Farinelli sung, and you will almost have formed a just idea of the thing." And, again, later, he writes "des miaulemens et des hurlemens effroyables, mêlés avec un tintamarre du diable,—voilà la musique Française en abrégé." At first the weather was extremely bad, but in May they began to enjoy the genial climate; they took long excursions to Versailles and Chantilly, happy "to walk by moonlight, and hear the ladies and the nightingales sing."

On the 1st of June, in company with Henry Conway, Walpole and Gray left Paris and settled at Rheims for three exquisite summer months. I fancy that these were among the happiest weeks in Gray's life, the most sunny and unconcerned. As the three friends came with particular introductions from Lord Conway, who knew Rheims well, they were welcomed with great cordiality into all the best society of the town. Gray found the provincial assemblies very stately and graceful, but without the easy familiarity of Parisian manners. The mode of entertainment was uniform, beginning with cards, in the midst of which every one rose to eat what was called the *gouter*, a service of fruits, cream, sweetmeats, crawfish, and cheese. People then sat down again to cards, until they had played forty deals, when they broke up into little parties for a promenade. That this formality was sometimes set aside we may gather from a very pretty little vignette that Gray slips into a letter to his mother:—

The other evening we happened to be got together in a com-

pany of eighteen people, men and women of the best fashion here, at a garden in the town, to walk, when one of the ladies bethought herself of asking, Why should we not sup here? Immediately the cloth was laid by the side of a fountain under the trees, and a very elegant supper served up; after which another said, "Come, let us sing," and directly began herself. From singing we insensibly fell to dancing, and singing in a round; when somebody mentioned the violins, and immediately a company of them was ordered, minuets were begun in the open air, and then came country dances, which held till four o'clock next morning; at which hour the gayest lady then proposed, that such as were weary should get into their coaches, and the rest of them should dance before them with the music in the van; and in this manner we paraded through all the principal streets of the city, and waked everybody in it. Mr. Walpole had a mind to make a custom of the thing, and would have given a ball in the same manner next week; but the women did not come into it; so I believe it will drop, and they will return to their dull cards and usual formalities.

Walpole intended to spend the winter of 1739 in the South of France, and was therefore not unwilling to loiter by the way. They thought to stay a fortnight at Rheims, but they received a vague intimation that Lord Conway and that prince of idle companions, the ever-sparkling George Selwyn, were coming, and they hung on for three months in expectation of them. At last, on the 7th of September, they left Rheims, and entered Dijon three days later. The capital of Burgundy, with its rich architecture and treasuries of art, made Gray regret the frivolous months they had spent at Rheims, while Walpole, who was eager to set off, would only allow him three or four days for exploration. On the 18th of September they were at Lyons, and this town became their headquarters for the next six weeks. The junction of the

rivers has provoked a multitude of conceits, but none perhaps so pretty as this of Gray's:—"The Rhone and Saône are two people, who, though of tempers extremely unlike, think fit to join hands here, and make a little party to travel to the Mediterranean in company; the lady comes gliding along through the fruitful plains of Burgundy, *incredibili lenitate, ita ut oculis in utram partem fluit judicari non possit*; the gentleman runs all rough and roaring down from the mountains of Switzerland to meet her; and with all her soft airs she likes him never the worse; she goes through the middle of the city in state, and he passes incog. without the walls, but waits for her a little below."

A fortnight later the friends set out on an excursion across the mountains, that they might accompany Henry Conway, who was now leaving them, as far as Geneva. They took the longest road through Savoy, that they might visit the Grande Chartreuse, which impressed Gray very forcibly by the solitary grandeur of its situation. It was, however, not on this occasion, but two years later, that he wrote his famous *Alcaic Ode* in the album of the monastery. The friends slept as the guests of the fathers, and proceeded next day to Chambéry, which greatly disappointed them; and sleeping one night at Aix-les-Bains, which they found deserted, and another at Annecy, they arrived at last at Geneva. They stayed there a week, partly to see Conway settled, and partly because they found it very bright and hospitable, returning at last to Lyons through the spurs of the Jura, and across the plains of La Bresse. They found awaiting them a letter from Sir Robert Walpole, in which he desired his son to go on to Italy, so they gladly resigned their project of spending the winter in France

and pushed on at once to the foot of the Alps ; armed against the cold with " muffs, hoods, and masks of beaver, fur boots, and bearskins." On the 6th of November they descended into Italy, after a very severe and painful journey of a week's duration, through two days of which they were hardly less frightened than Addison had been during his Alpine adventures a generation earlier. It was on the sixth day of this journey that the incident occurred which was so graphically described both by Gray and Walpole, and which is often referred to. Walpole had a fat little black spaniel, called Tory, which he was very fond of ; and as this pampered creature was trotting beside the ascending chaise, enjoying his little constitutional, a young wolf sprang out of the covert and snatched the shrieking favourite away from amongst the carriages and servants before any one had the presence of mind to draw a pistol. Walpole screamed and wept, but Tory had disappeared for ever. Mason regrets that Gray did not write a mock-heroic poem on this incident, as a companion to the ode on Walpole's cat, and it must be admitted that the theme was an excellent one.

The name of Addison has just been mentioned, and Walpole's remarks about the horrors of Alpine travelling do indeed savour of the old-fashioned fear of what was sublime in nature. But Gray's sentiments on the occasion were very different, and his letter to his mother dilates on the beauty of the crags and precipices in a way that shows him to have been the first of the romantic lovers of nature, since even Rousseau had then hardly developed his later and more famous attitude, and Vernet had only just begun to contemplate the sea with ecstasy. On the 7th of November, 1739, the travellers had reached Turin, but among the clean streets and formal avenues of that prosaic city, the

thoughts of Gray were still continually in the wonders he had left behind him. In a delightful letter to West, written nine days later, he is still dreaming of the Alps. "I own I have not, as yet, anywhere met with those grand and simple works of art that are to amaze one, and whose sight one is to be the better for; but those of nature have astonished me beyond expression. In our little journey up to the Grande Chartreuse I do not remember to have gone ten paces without an exclamation that there was no restraining; *not a precipice, not a torrent, not a cliff, but is pregnant with religion and poetry.* There are certain scenes that would awe an atheist into belief, without the help of other argument. One need not have a very fantastic imagination to see spirits there at noon-day. You have Death perpetually before your eyes, only so far removed as to compose the mind without frightening it. I am well persuaded St. Bruno was a man of no common genius, to choose such a situation for his retirement; and perhaps I should have been a disciple of his, had I been born in his time." It is hard to cease quoting, all this letter being so new, and beautiful, and suggestive; but perhaps enough has been given to show in what terms and on what occasion the picturesqueness of Switzerland was first discovered. At the same time the innovator concedes that Mont Cenis does perhaps abuse its privilege of being frightful. Among the precipices Gray read Livy, *Nives celo prope immita*, but when the chaise drove down into the sunlit plains of Italy, he laid that severe historian aside, and plunged into the pages of Silvas Italicus.

On the 18th of November they passed on to Genoa, which Gray particularly describes as "a vast semicircular basin, full of fine blue sea, and vessels of all sorts and

sizes, some sailing out, some coming in, and others at anchor; and all round it palaces, and churches peeping over one another's heads, gardens, and marble terraces full of orange and cypress trees, fountains and trellis-works covered with vines, which altogether compose the grandest of theatres." The music in Italy was a feast to him, and from this time we may date that careful study of Italian music which occupied a great part of the ensuing year. Ten days at Genoa left them deeply in love with it, and loth to depart; but they wished to push on, and crossing the mountains they found themselves within three days at Piacenza, and so at Parma; out of which city they were locked on a cold winter's night, and were only able to gain admittance by an ingenious stratagem which amused them very much, but which they have neglected to record. They greatly enjoyed the Correggios in this place, for Horace Walpole was now learning to be a connoisseur, and then they proceeded to Bologna, where they spent twelve days in seeing the sights. They found it very irksome to be without introductions, especially after the hospitality which they had enjoyed in France, and as it was winter they could only see, in Gray's words, the skeleton of Italy. He was at least able to observe "very public and scandalous doings between the vine and the eln-trees, and how the olive-trees are shocked there-upon." It is also particularly pleasant to learn that he himself was "grown as fat as a hog;" he was, in fact, perfectly happy and well, perhaps for the only time in his life.

They crossed the Apennines on the 15th of the month, and descended through a winding-sheet of mist into the streets of Florence, where Mr. Horace Mann's servant met them at the gates, and conducted them to his house, which, with a certain interval, was to be their home for

fifteen months. Horace Mann was a dull letter-writer, but he seems to have been a very engaging and unwearying companion. Gray, a man not easily pleased, pronounced him "the best and most obliging person in the world." He was then resident, and afterwards envoy extraordinary at the Court of Tuscany, and retains a place in history as the correspondent of Horace Walpole through nearly half a century of undivided friendship. Here again the travel-stained youths had the pleasures of society offered to them, and Gray could encase himself again in silk and buckram, and wear ruffles at the tips of his fingers. Moreover, his mind, the most actively acquisitive then stirring in Europe, could engage once more in its enchanting exercises, and store up miscellaneous information with unflagging zeal in a thousand nooks of brain and notebook. Music, painting, and statuary occupied him chiefly, and his unpublished catalogues, not less strikingly than his copious printed notes, show the care and assiduity of his research. His *Criticisms on Architecture and Painting in Italy*, is not an amusing treatise, but it is without many of the glaring faults of the æsthetic dissertations of the age. The remarks about antique sculpture are often very just and penetrative, as fine sometimes as those exquisite notes by Shelley, which first saw the light in 1880. Some of his views about modern masters, too, show the native propriety of his taste, and his entire indifference to contemporary judgment. For Caravaggio, for instance, then at the height of his vogue, he has no patience; although, in common with all critics of the eighteenth century, and all human beings till about a generation ago, he finds Guido inexpressibly brilliant and harmonious. It is, however, chiefly interesting to us to notice that in these copious notes on painting Gray distinguishes himself from other

writers of his time by his simple and purely artistic mode of considering what is presented to him, every other critic, as far as I remember, down to Lessing and Winckelmann, being chiefly occupied with rhetorical definitions of the action upon the human mind of art in the abstract. Gray scarcely mentions a single work, however, precedent to the age of Raphael; and it will not do to insist too strongly upon his independence of the prejudices of his time.

In music he seems to have been still better occupied. He was astonished, during his stay in Florence, at the beauty and originality of the new school of Italian composers, at that time but little known in England. He seems to have been particularly struck with Leonardo da Vinci, who was then just dead, and with Bononcini and the German Hasse, who were still alive. At Naples a few months later he found Leonardo Leo, and was attracted by his genius. But the full ardour of his admiration was reserved for the works of G. B. Pergolesi, whose elevation above the other musicians of his age Gray was the first to observe and assert. Pergolesi, who had died four years before, at the age of twenty-six, was entirely unknown outside Tuscany; and to the English poet belongs the praise, it is said, of being the first to bring a collection of his pieces to London, and to obtain for this great master a hearing in British concert-rooms. Gray was one of the few poets who have possessed not merely an ear for music, but considerable executive skill. Mason tells us that he enjoyed, probably at this very time, instruction on the harpsichord from the younger Scarlatti, but his main gift was for vocal music. He had a small, but very clear and pure voice, and was much admired for his singing in his youth, but during later years was so shy that Walpole "never could but once prevail on him to give a proof of it; and then it

was with so much pain to himself, that it gave Walpole no manner of pleasure." In after-years he had a harpsichord in his rooms at college, and continued to cultivate this sentimental sort of company in his long periods of solitude. Gray formed a valuable collection of MS. music while he was in Italy; it consisted of nine large volumes, bound in vellum, and was enriched by a variety of notes in Gray's handwriting.

It was at Florence, on the 12th of March, 1740, that Gray took into his head to commence a correspondence with his old schoolfellow, Dr. Thomas Wharton ("my dear, dear Wharton, which is a 'dear' more than I give anybody else"), who afterwards became fellow of Pembroke Hall, and one of Gray's staunchest and most sympathetic friends. To the biographer of the poet, moreover, the name of Wharton must be ever dear, since it was to him that the least reserved and most personal of all Gray's early letters were indited. This Dr. Wharton was a quiet, good man, with no particular genius or taste, but dowered with that delightful tact and sympathetic attraction which are the lode-star of irritable and weary genius. He was by a few months Gray's junior, and survived him three and twenty years, indolently intending, it is said, to the last, to collect his memories of his great friend, but dying in his eightieth year so suddenly as to be incapable of any preparation. In this his first letter to Wharton Gray mentions the death of Pope Clement XII., which had occurred about a month before, and states his intention to be at Rome in time to see the coronation of his successor, which however, as it happened, was delayed six months. So little however were Walpole and Gray prepared for this, that they set out in the middle of March 1740 in great fear lest they should be too late, and entered Rome

on the 31st of that month. They found the conclave of cardinals sitting and like to sit; and they prepared themselves to enjoy Rome in the meanwhile. The magnificence of the ancient city infinitely surpassed Gray's expectation, but he found modern Rome and its inhabitants very contemptible and disgusting. There was no society among the Roman nobles, who pushed parsimony to an extreme, and showed not the least hospitality. "In short, child," (Walpole says to West, on the 16th of April,) "after sunset one passes one's time here very ill; and if I did not wish for you in the mornings, it would be no compliment to tell you that I do in the evening." From Tivoli, a month later, Gray writes West a very contemptuous description of the artificial cascades and cliffs of the Duke of Modena's palace-gardens there; but a few days afterwards at Alba and Frascati, he was inspired in a gentler mood with the *Alcaic Ode to Favonius*, beginning "*Mater rosarum.*" Of the same date is a letter laughing at West, who had made some extremely classical allusions in his correspondence, and who is indulged with local colour to his heart's content.

I am to-day just returned from Alba, a good deal fatigued, for you know (from Statius) that the Appian is somewhat tiresome. We dined at Pompey's; he indeed was gone for a few days to his Tusculan, but, by the care of his villicus, we made an admirable meal. We had the dugs of a pregnant sow, a peacock, a dish of thrushes, a noble scarus just fresh from the Tyrrhene, and some conchylia of the Lake, with garum sauce. For my part I never ate better at Lucullus's table. We drank half-a-dozen cyathi apiece of ancient Alban to Pholoë's health; and, after bathing, and playing an hour at ball, we mounted our essedum again, and proceeded up the mount to the temple. The priests there entertained us with an account of a wonderful shower of birds' eggs, that had fallen two days before, which had no sooner

touched the ground, but they were converted into gudgeons; as also that the night past, a dreadful voice had been heard out of the Adytum, which spoke Greek during a full half-hour, but nobody understood it. But quitting my Romanities, to your great joy and mine, let me tell you in plain English that we come from Albano.

Some entertainments Gray had at Rome. He mentions one ball at which he performed the part of the mouse at the party. The chief virtuosa of the hour, La Diamantina, played on the violin, and Giovannino and Pasquellini sang. All the secular grand monde of Rome was there, and there Gray, from the corner where he sat regaling himself with iced fruits, watched the object of his hearty disapproval, the English Pretender, "displaying his rueful length of person." Gray's hatred of the Stuarts was one of his few pronounced political sentiments, and while at Rome he could not resist making a contemptuous jest of them in a letter which he believed that James would open. He says, indeed, that all letters sent or received by English people in Rome were at that time read by the Pretender. In June, as the cardinals could not make up their minds, the young men decided to wait no longer, and proceeded southwards to Terracina, Capua, and Naples. On the 17th of June they visited the remains of Herculaneum, then only just exposed and identified, and before the end of the month they went back to Rome. There, still finding that no Pope was elected, and weary of the dreariness and formality of that great city, Walpole determined to return to Florence. They had now been absent from home and habitually thrown upon one another for entertainment during nearly fifteen months, and their friendship had hitherto shown no abatement. But they had arrived at that point of familiarity when a very little

disagreement is sufficient to produce a quarrel. No such serious falling-out happened for nearly a year more, but we find Gray, whose note-books were inexhaustible, a little peevish at being forced to leave the treasures of Rome so soon. However, Florence was very enjoyable. They took up their abode once more in the house of Horace Mann, where they looked down into the Arno from their bedroom windows, and could resort at a moment's notice to the marble bridge, to hear music, eat iced fruits, and sup by moonlight. It is a place, Gray says, "excellent to employ all one's animal sensations in, but utterly contrary to one's rational powers. I have struck a medal upon myself; the device is thus O, and the motto *Nihilissimo*, which I take in the most concise manner to contain a full account of my person, sentiments, occupations, and late glorious successes. We get up at twelve o'clock, breakfast till three, dine till four, sleep till six, drink cooling liquors till eight, go to the bridge till ten, sup till two, and so sleep till twelve again."

In the midst of all this laziness, however, the business of literature recurred to his thoughts. He wrote some short things in Latin, then a fragment of sixty hexameter verses on the Gaurus, and then set about a very ambitious didactic epic *De Principiis Cogitandi*. It is a curious commentary on the small bulk of Gray's poetical productions to point out that this Latin poem, only two fragments of which were ever written, is considerably the longest of his writings in verse. As we now possess it, it was chiefly written in Florence during the summer of 1740; some passages were added at Stoke in 1742; but by that time Gray had determined, like other learned Cambridge poets, Spenser and Milton, to bend to the vulgar ear, and leave his Latin behind him. The *De Principiis Cogitandi* is now entirely neg-

lected, and at no time attracted much curiosity ; yet it is a notable production in its way. It was an attempt to crystallize the philosophy of Locke, for which Gray entertained the customary reverence of his age, in Lucretian hexameters. How the Soul begins to Know ; by what primary Notions Mnemosyne opens her succession of thoughts, and her slender chain of ideas ; how Reason contrives to augment her slow empire in the natural breast of man ; and how anger, sorrow, fear and anxious care are implanted there, of these things he applies himself to sing ; and do not thou disdain the singer, thou glory, thou unquestioned second luminary of the English race, thou unnamed spirit of John Locke. With the exception of one episode in which he compares the human mind in reverie to a Hamadryad who wanders in the woodland, and is startled to find herself mirrored in a pool, the plan of this poem left no scope for fancy or fine imagery ; the theme is treated with a certain rhetorical dignity, but the poet has been so much occupied with the matter in hand, that his ideas have suffered some congestion. Nevertheless he is himself, and not Virgil or Ovid or Lucretius, and this alone is no small praise for a writer of modern Latin verse.

If the *De Principiis Cogitandi* had been published when it was written, it is probable that it would have won some measure of instant celebrity for its author, but the undiluted conclusions of Locke were no longer interesting in a second hand form in 1774, when they had already been subjected to the expansions of Hume and the criticisms of Leibnitz. Nor was Gray at all on the wave of philosophical thought ; he seems no less indifferent to Berkeley's *Principles of Human Knowledge* than he is unaware of Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature*, which had been printed in 1739, soon after Gray left England. This Latin

epic was a distinct false start, but he did not totally abandon the hope of completing it until 1746.

In August 1740 the friends went over to Bologna for a week, and on their return had the mortification to learn that a Pope, Benedict XIV., had been elected while they were within four days' journey of Rome. They began to think of home; there were talks of taking a felucca over from Leghorn to Marseilles, or of crossing through Germany by Venice and the Tyrol. Florence they began to find, "one of the dullest cities in Italy," and there is no doubt that they began to be on very strained and uncomfortable terms with one another. They had the grace, however, absolutely to conceal it from other people, and to the very last each of them wrote to West without the least hint of want of confidence in the other. On the 24th of April, 1741, Gray and Walpole set off from Florence, and spent a few days in Bologna to hear La Viscontina sing; from Bologna they proceeded to Reggio, and there occurred the famous quarrel which has perhaps been more often discussed than any other fact in Gray's life. It has been said that he discovered Walpole opening a letter addressed to Gray, or perhaps written by him, to see if anything unpleasant about himself were said in it, and that he broke away from him with scathing anger and scorn, casting Walpole off for ever, and at once continuing his journey to Venice alone. But this is really little more than conjecture. Both the friends were very careful to keep their counsel, and within three years the breach was healed. One thing is certain, that Walpole was the offender. When Gray was dead and Mason was writing his life, Walpole insisted that this fact should be stated, although he very reasonably declined to go into particulars for the public. He wrote a

little paragraph for Mason, taking the blame upon himself, but added for the biographer's private information a longer and more intelligible account, saying that "while one is living, it is not pleasant to read one's private quarrels discussed in magazines and newspapers," but desiring that Mason would preserve this particular account, that it might be given to posterity. But Walpole lived on until 1797, and by a singular coincidence Mason, who was so much younger, only survived him a few days. Accordingly there was a delay in giving this passage to the world, and though it is known to students of Horace Walpole's *Correspondence*, it has never taken the authoritative place it deserves in Gray's life. It is all we possess in the way of direct evidence, and it does great credit no less to Walpole's candour than to his experience of the human heart. He wrote to Mason (March 2, 1773):—

I am conscious that in the beginning of the differences between Gray and me the fault was mine. I was too young, too fond of my own diversions, nay, I do not doubt, too much intoxicated by indulgence, vanity, and the insolence of my situation as Prime Minister's son, not to have been inattentive and insensible to the feelings of one I thought below me; of one, I blush to say it, that I knew was obliged to me; of one whom presumption and folly, perhaps, made me deem not my superior *then* in parts, though I have since felt my infinite inferiority to him. I treated him insolently; he loved me, and I did not think he did. I reproached him with the difference between us, when he acted from convictions of knowing he was my superior. I often disregarded his wishes of seeing places, which I would not quit other amusements to visit, though I offered to send him to them without me. Forgive me, if I say that his temper was not conciliating; at the same time that I will confess to you that he acted a more friendly part, had I had the sense to take

advantage of it, he freely told me of my faults. I declared I did not desire to hear them, nor would correct them. You will not wonder that with the dignity of his spirit, and the obstinate carelessness of mine, the breach must have grown wider till we became incompatible.

This is the last word on the subject of the quarrel, and after a statement so generous, frank and lucid, it only remains to remind the reader that these were lads of twenty-three and twenty-four respectively, that they had been thrown far too exclusively and too long on one another for entertainment, and that probably Walpole is too hard upon himself in desiring to defend Gray. There is not the slightest trace in his letters or in Gray's of any rudeness on Walpole's part. The main point is that the quarrel was made up in 1744, and that after some coldness on Gray's side, they became as intimate as ever for the remainder of their lives.

Walpole stayed at Reggio, and Gray's heart would have stirred with remorse had he known that his old friend was even then sickening for a quinsy, of which he might have died, if the excellent Joseph Spence, Oxford professor of Poetry and the friend of Pope, had not happened to be passing through Reggio with Lord Lincoln, and had not given up his whole time to nursing him. Meanwhile the unconscious Gray, sore with pride, passed on to Venice, where he spent two months, in the company of a Mr. Whithead and a Mr. Chute. In July he hired a courier, passed leisurely through the north of Italy, visiting Padua and Verona, reached Turin on the 15th of August, and began to cross the Alps next day. He stayed once more at the Grande Chartreuse, and inscribed in the Album of the Fathers his famous *Alcaic Ode*, beginning "Oh Tu, severi Religio loci," which is

the best known and practically the last of his Latin poems. In this little piece of twenty lines we first recognize that nicety of expression, that delicate lapidary style, that touch of subdued romantic sentiment, which distinguish the English poetry of Gray; while it is perhaps not fantastic to detect in its closing lines the first dawn of those ideas which he afterwards expanded into the *Elegy in a Country Churchyard*. The original MS. in the album became an object of great interest to visitors to the hospice after Gray's death, and was highly prized by the fathers. It exists, however, no longer; it was destroyed by a rabble from Grenoble during the French Revolution. Gray reached Lyons on the 25th of August, and returned to London on the 1st of September, 1741, after an absence from England of exactly two years and five months. Walpole, being cured of his complaint, arrived in England ten days later. To a good-natured letter from Henry Conway, suggesting a renewal of intimacy between the friends, Gray returned an answer of the coldest civility, and Horace Walpole now disappears from our narrative for three years.

CHAPTER III

STOKE-POGIS—DEATH OF WEST—FIRST ENGLISH POEMS.

ON his return from Italy Gray found his father lying very ill, exhausted by successive attacks of gout, and unable to rally from them. Two months later, on the 6th of November, 1741, he died in a paroxysm of the disease. His last act had been to squander his fortune, which seems to have remained until that time almost unimpaired, on building a country-house at Wanstead. Not only had he not written to tell his son of this adventure, but he had actually contrived to conceal it from his wife. Mason is not correct in saying that it became necessary to sell this house immediately after Philip Gray's death, or that it fetched 2000*l.* less than it had cost ; it remained in the possession of Mrs. Gray. With the ruins of a fortune Mrs. Gray and her sister, Mary Antrobus, seem to have kept house for a year in Cornhill, till, at the death of their brother-in-law, Mr. Jonathan Rogers, on the 21st of October, 1742, they joined their widowed sister Anna in her house at Stoke-Pogis, in Buckinghamshire. During these months they wound up their private business in Cornhill, and disposed of their shop on tolerably advantageous terms ; and apparently Gray first imagined that the family property would be enough to provide amply for him also. Accordingly he began the study of the law,

that being the profession for which he had been originally intended. For six months or more he seems to have stayed in London, applying himself rather languidly to common law, and giving his real thoughts and sympathies to those who demanded them most, his mother and his unfortunate friend Richard West. The latter, indeed, he found in a miserable condition ; in June 1740 that young man, having lived at the Temple till he was sick of it, left chambers, finding that neither the prestige of his grandfather, nor the reputation of his uncle, Sir Thomas Burnet, advanced him at all in their profession. He was without heart in his work, his talents were not drawn out in the legal direction, and his affectionate and somewhat feminine nature suffered from loneliness and want of congenial society. He had hoped that Walpole would be able to find him a post in the diplomatic service, or in the army, but this was not possible. Gray strongly disapproved of the step West took in leaving the Temple, and wrote him from Florence a letter full of kindly and cordial good sense ; but when he arrived in London he found West in a far more broken condition of mind and body than he had anticipated. In extreme agitation West confided to his friend a terrible secret which he had discovered, and which Gray preserved in silence until the close of his life, when he told it to Norton Nicholls. It is a painful story which need not be repeated here, but which involved the reputation of West's mother with the name of his late father's secretary, a Mr. Williams, whom she finally married when her son was dead. West had not the power to rally from this shock, and the comfort of Gray's society only slightly delayed the end. In March 1742 he was obliged to leave town, and went to stay with a friend at Popes,

near Hatfield, Herts, where he lingered three months, and died.

The winter which Gray and West spent together in London was remarkable in the career of the former as the beginning of his most prolific year of poetical composition, a vocal year to be followed by six of obstinate silence. The first original production in English verse was the fragment of a tragedy of *Agrippina*, of which one complete scene, and a few odd lines, have been preserved in his works. In this attempt at the drama he was inspired by Racine, and neither Addison, nor Aaron Hill, nor James Thomson, had contrived to be more cold or academic a playwright. The subject, which had been treated in tragedy more than a century earlier by May, was well adapted for stately stage-effect, and the scheme of Gray's play, so far as we know it, was not without interest. But he was totally unfitted to write for the boards, and even the beauty of versification in *Agrippina* cannot conceal from us for a moment its ineptitude. All that exists of the play is little else than a soliloquy in which the Empress defies the rage of Nero, and shows that she possesses

A heart that glows with the pure Julian fire,

by daring her son to the contest :

Around thee call

The gilded swarm that wantons in the sunshine
Of thy full favour ; Seneca be there
In gorgeous phrase of laboured eloquence
To dress thy plea, and Burrhus strengthen it
With his plain soldier's oath, and honest seeming.
Against thee — liberty and Agrippina !
The world the prize ! and fair befall the victors !

As a study in blank verse *Agrippina* shows the result of long apprenticeship to the ancients, and marches with a sharp and dignified step that reminds the reader more of Landor than of any other dramatist. In all other essentials, however, the tragedy must be considered, like the didactic epic, a false start; but Gray was now very soon to learn his real vocation.

The opening scene of the tragedy was sent down into Hertfordshire to amuse West, who seemed at first to have recovered his spirits, and who sat "purring by the fireside, in his arm-chair, with no small satisfaction." He was able to busy himself with literature, delighting in the new book of the *Dunciad*, and reading Tacitus for the first time. His cool reception of the latter roused Gray to defend his favourite historian with great vigour. "Pray do not imagine," he says, "that Tacitus, of all authors in the world, can be tedious . . . Yet what I admire in him above all is his detestation of tyranny, and the high spirit of liberty that every now and then breaks out, as it were, whether he would or no." Poor West on the 4th of April, racked by an "importunissima tussis," declines to do battle against Tacitus, but attacks *Agrippina* with a frankness and a critical sagacity which slew that ill-starred tragedy on the spot. It is evident that Gray had no idea of West's serious condition, for he rallies him on being the first who ever made a muse of a cough, and is confident that "those wicked remains of your illness will soon give way to warm weather and gentle exercise." It is in the same letter that Gray speaks with some coldness of *Joseph Andrews*, and reverts with the warmth on which we have already commented to the much more congenial romances of Marivaux and Crébillon. We may here confess that Gray certainly misses, in com-

mon with most men of his time, the one great charm of the literary character at its best, namely enthusiasm for excellence in contemporaries. It is a sign of a dry age when the principal authors of a country look askance on one another. Some silly critics in our own days have discovered with indignant horror the existence of "mutual admiration societies." A little more acquaintance with the history of literature might have shown them how strong the sentiment of comradeship has been in every age of real intellectual vitality. It is much to be deplored that the chilly air of the eighteenth century prevented the "mutual admiration" of such men as Gray and Fielding.

This is perhaps an appropriate point at which to pause and consider the condition of English poetry at the moment at which we have now arrived. When Gray began seriously to write, in 1742, the considerable poets then alive in England might have been counted on the fingers of two hands. Pope and Swift were nearing the close of their careers of glory and suffering, the former still vocal to the last, and now quite unrivalled by any predecessor in personal prestige. As a matter of fact, however, he was not destined to publish anything more of any consequence. Three other names, Goldsmith, Churchill, and Cowper, were those of children not to appear in literature for many years to come. Gray's actual competitors, therefore, were only four in number. Of these the eldest, Young, was just beginning to publish, at the age of fifty-eight, the only work by which he is now much remembered, or which can still be read with pleasure. The *Night Thoughts* was destined to make him the most prominent poetical figure for the next ten years. Thomson, on the other hand, a younger and far

more vital spirit, had practically retreated already upon his laurels, and was presently to die, without again addressing the public except in the luckless tragedy of *Sophonisba*, bequeathing, however, to posterity the treasure of his *Castle of Indolence*. Samuel Johnson had published *London*, a nine days' wonder, and had subsided into temporary oblivion. Collins, just twenty-one years of age, had brought out a pamphlet of *Persian Eclogues* without attracting the smallest notice from anybody. Among the lesser stars, Allan Ramsay and Ambrose Philips were retired old men, now a long while silent, who remembered the days of Addison; Armstrong had flashed into unenviable distinction with a poem more clever than decorous; Dyer, one of the lazy men who grew fat too soon, was buried in his own *Fleece*; Shenstone and Akenside, much younger men, were beginning to be talked about in the circle of their friends, but had as yet done little. The stage, therefore, upon which Gray proceeded very gingerly to step, was not a crowded one, and before he actually ventured to appear in print, it was stripped of its most notable adornments. Yet this apparent advantage was in reality a great disadvantage; as Mr. Matthew Arnold admirably says, "born in the same year with Milton, Gray would have been another man; born in the same year with Burns, he would have been another man." As it was, his genius pined away for want of movement in the atmosphere; the wells of poetry were stagnant, and there was no angel to strike the waters.

The amiable dispute as to the merits of *Agrippina* led the friends on to a wider theme, the peculiar qualities of the style of Shakespeare. How low the standard of criticism had fallen in that generation, may be estimated

when we consider that Theobald, himself the editor and annotator of Shakespeare, in palming off his forgery of *The Double Falsehood*, which contains such writing as this,—

Fond Echo, forego the light strain,
And heedfully hear a lost Maid;
Go tell the false ear of the Swain
How deeply his vows have betrayed,

as a genuine work by the author of *Hamlet*, had ventured to appeal to the style as giving the best evidence of the truth of his pretensions. Gray had a more delicate sense of literary flavour than this, and his remarks about the vigour and pictorial richness of Elizabethan drama, since which “our language has greatly degenerated,” are highly interesting even to a modern reader. Through April and May he kept up a brisk correspondence, chiefly on books, with West at Popes, and on the 5th of the latter month he received from his friend an *Ode to May*, beginning

Dear Gray, that always in my heart
Possessest still the better part,

which is decidedly the most finished of West's productions. Some of the stanzas of this ode possess much suavity and grace :—

Awake, in all thy glories drest,
Recall the zephyrs from the west;
Restore the sun, revive the skies,
At mine and Nature's call, arise!
Great Nature's self upbraids thy stay
And misses her accustomed May.

This is almost in the later style of Gray himself, and the poem received from him commendation as being

"light and genteel," a phrase that sounds curiously old-fashioned nowadays. Gray meanwhile is busy translating Propertius, and shows no sign of application to legal studies. On the contrary, he has spent the month of April in studying the *Peloponnesian War*, the greater part of Pliny and Martial, Anacreon, Petrarch and Aulus Gellius, a range of reading which must have entirely excluded Coke upon Lyttelton. West's last letter is dated May 11, 1742, and is very cheerfully written, but closes with words that afterwards took a solemn meaning, "*Vale, et vive paulisper cum vivis.*" On the 27th of the same month Gray wrote a very long letter to West, in which he shows no consciousness whatever of his friend's desperate condition; this epistle contains an interesting reference to his own health:—

Mine, you are to know, is a white Melancholy, or rather Leucocholy, for the most part; which, though it seldom laughs or dances, nor ever amounts to what one calls Joy or Pleasure, yet is a good easy sort of a state, and *ça ne laisse que de s'amuser*. The only fault is its vapidty, which is apt now and then to give a sort of *Ennui*, which makes one form certain little wishes that signify nothing. But there is another sort, black indeed, which I have now and then felt, that has somewhat in it like Tertulian's rule of faith, *Credo quia impossibile est*; for it believes, nay, is sure of everything that is unlikely, so it be but frightful; and on the other hand excludes and shuts its eyes to the most possible hopes, and everything that is pleasurable; from this the Lord deliver us! for none but He and sunshiny weather can do it.

Grimly enough, while he was thus analysing his feelings, his friend lay at the point of death. Five days after this letter was written West breathed his last, on the 1st of June, 1742, in the twenty-sixth year of his age, and was buried in the chancel of Hatfield Church.

Probably on the same day that West died, Gray went down into Buckinghamshire to visit his uncle and aunt Rogers at Stoke-Pogis, a village which his name has immortalized, and of which it may now be convenient to say a few words. The manor of Stoke Pogis or Poges is first mentioned in a deed of 1291, and passed through the hands of a variety of eminent personages down to the great Earl of Huntingdon in the reign of Henry VIII. The village, if such it can be called, is sparsely scattered over a wide extent of country. The church, a very picturesque structure of the fourteenth century, with a wooden spire, is believed to have been built by Sir John Molines about 1340. It stands on a little level space about four miles north of the Thames at Eton. From the neighbourhood of the church no vestige of hamlet or village is visible, and the aspect of the place is slightly artificial, like a rustic church in a park on the stage. The traveller almost expects to see the grateful peasantry of an opera, cheerfully habited, make their appearance, dancing on the greensward. As he faces the church from the south, the white building, extravagantly Palladian, which lies across the meadows on his left hand, is Stoke Park, begun under the direction of Alexander Nasmyth, the landscape-painter, in 1789, and finished by James Wyatt, R.A., for the Hon. Thomas Penn, who bought the manor from the representatives of Gray's friend Lady Cobham. At the back of the visitor, stands a heavy and hideous mausoleum, bearing a eulogistic inscription to Gray, and this also is due to the taste of Wyatt and was erected in 1799. If we still remain on the south side of the churchyard, the chimneys seen through the thick umbrageous foliage on our right hand, and behind the church, are those of the ancient Manor House, celebrated

by Gray in the *Long Story*, and built by the Earl of Huntingdon in 1555. The road from Farnham Royal passes close to it, but there is little to be seen. Although in Gray's time it seems to have been in perfect preservation as an exquisite specimen of Tudor architecture, with its high gables, projecting windows and stacks of clustered chimney-shafts, it did not suit the corrupt Georgian taste of the Penns, and was pulled down in 1789. Wyatt refused to have anything to say to it, and remarked that "the style of the edifice was deficient in those excellencies which might have pleaded for restoration." Of the historical building in which Sir Christopher Hatton lived and Sir Edward Coke died nothing is left but the fantastic chimneys, and a rough shell which is used as a stable. This latter was for some time fitted up as a studio for Sir Edwin Landseer, and he was working here in 1852, when he suddenly became deranged. This old ruin, so full of memories, is only one of a number of ancient and curious buildings within the boundaries of the parish of Stoke Pogis. When Gray came to Stoke in 1742, the Manor House was inhabited by the ranger of Windsor Forest, Viscount Cobham, who died in 1749. It was his widow who, as we shall presently see, became the intimate friend of Gray and inspired his remarkable poem of the *Long Story*.

The house of Mrs Rogers, to which Gray and his mother now proceeded, was situated at West End, in the northern part of the parish. It was reached from the church by a path across the meadows, alongside the hospital, a fine brick building of the sixteenth century, and so by the lane leading out into Stoke Common. Just at the end of this lane, on the left-hand side, looking southwards, with the common at its back, stood West

End House, a simple farmstead of two stories, with a rustic porch before the front door, and this was Gray's home for many years. It is now thoroughly altered and enlarged, and no longer contains any mark of its original simplicity. The charm of the house to the poet must have been that Burnham Beeches, Stoke Common, and Brockhurst Woods, were all at hand, and within reach of the most indolent of pedestrians.

Gray had been resident but very few days at Stoke-Pogis before he wrote the poem with which his poetical works usually open, his *Ode to Spring*. Among the MS. at Pembroke there occurs a copy of this poem, in Gray's handwriting, entitled *Noon-Tide: an Ode*; and in the margin of it there is found this interesting note: "The beginning of June, 1742, sent to Fav: not knowing he was then dead." Favonius was the familiar name of West, and this shows that Gray received no intimation of his friend's approaching end, and no summons to his bedside. The loss of West was one of the most profound that his reserved nature ever suffered; when that name was mentioned to him, nearly thirty years afterwards, he became visibly agitated, and to the end of his life he seemed to feel in the death of West "the affliction of a recent loss." We are therefore not surprised to find the *Ode to Spring*, which belongs to a previous condition of things, lighter in tone, colder in sentiment, and more trivial in conception than his other serious productions. We are annoyed that, in the very outset, he should borrow from Milton his "rosy-bosomed Hours," and from Pope his "purple year." Again there is a perplexing change of tone from the beginning where he was perhaps inspired by that exquisite strain of florid fancy, the *Pervigilium Veneris*, to the stoic moralizings of the later stanzas:—

How vain the ardour of the crowd,
How low, how little are the proud,
How indigent the great!

It may be noted, by the way, that for many years the last two adjectives, now so happily placed, were awkwardly transposed. The best stanza, without doubt, is the penultimate:—

To Contemplation's sober eye
Such is the race of Man :
And they that creep and they that fly
Shall end where they began.
Alike the Busy and the Gay
But flatter through life's little day,
In Fortune's varying colours drest :
Bruis'd by the hand of rough Mischance
Or chill'd by Age, their airy dance
They leave, in dust to rest.

The final stanza, with its "glittering female," and its "painted plumage" is puerile in its attempted excess of simplicity, and errs, though in more fantastic language, exactly as such crude studies of Wordsworth's as *Andrew Jones* or *The Two Thieves* erred half a century later. Nothing was gained by the poet's describing himself "a solitary fly" without a hive to go to. The mistake was one which Gray never repeated, but it is curious to find two of the most sublime poets in our language, both specially eminent for loftiness of idea, beginning by eschewing all reasonable dignity of expression.

But although the *Ode to Spring* no longer forms a favourite part of Gray's poetical works, it possessed considerable significance in 1742, and particularly on account of its form. It was the first note of protest against the hard versification which had reigned in England for more

than sixty years. The Augustan age seems to have suffered from a dulness of ear, which did not permit it to detect a rhyme unless it rang at the close of the very next pause. Hence, in the rare cases where a lyric movement was employed, the ordinary octosyllabic couplet took the place of those versatile measures in which the Elizabethan and Jacobite poets had delighted. Swift, Lady Winchelsea, Parnell, Philips, and Green, the five poets of the beginning of the eighteenth century who rebelled against heroic verse, got no further in metrical innovation than the shorter and more ambling couplet. Dyer, in his greatly overrated piece called *Grongar Hill*, followed these his predecessors. But Gray, from the very first, showed a disposition to return to more national forms, and to work out his stanzas on a more harmonic principle. He seems to have disliked the facility of the couplet, and the vague length to which it might be repeated. His view of a poem was that it should have a vertebrate form, which should respond, if not absolutely to its subject, at least to its mood. In short he was a genuine lyricist, and our literature had possessed none since Milton and the last cavalier song-writers. Yet his stanzas are built up from very simple materials. Here, in the *Ode to Spring*, we begin with a quatrain of the common ballad-measures; an octosyllabic couplet is added, and this would close it with a rustic effect, were the music not prolonged by the addition of three lines more, while the stanza closes gravely with a short line of six syllables.

The news of the death of West deepened Gray's vein of poetry, but did not stop its flow. He poured forth his grief and affection in some impassioned hexameters, full of earnest feeling, which he afterwards tried, ineptly enough, to tack on to the icy periods of his *De Principiis*

Cogitandi. In no other of his writings does Gray employ quite the same personal and emotional accents, in none does he speak out so plainly from the heart, and with so little attention to his singing robes :—

Vidi egomet duro graviter concussa dolore
Pectora, in alterius non unquam lenta dolorem;
Et languere oculos vidi, et pallescere amantem
Vultum, quo nunquam Pietas nisi rara, Fidesque,
Altus amor Veri, et purum spirabat Honestum.
Visa tamen tardi demum inclementia morbi
Cessare est, reducemque iterum roseo ore Salutem
Speravi, atque una tecum, dilecta Favoni!
Credulus heu longos, ut quondam, fallere Soles.

This fragment, the most attractive of his Latin poems, trips on a tag from Propertius, and suddenly ceases, nor is there extant any later effusion of Gray's in the same language. He celebrated the death of Favonius in another piece, which is far more familiar to general readers. The MS. of this sonnet, now at Cambridge, is marked "at Stoke: Aug. 1742;" it was not published till Mason included it in his *Memoirs*.

In vain to me the smiling mornings shine
And reddening Phœbus lifts his golden fire:
The birds in vain their amorous descant join,
Or cheerful fields resume their green attire:
These ears alas! for other notes repine,
A different object do these eyes require;
My lonely anguish melts no heart but mine,
And in my breast th' imperfect joys expire.
Yet morning smiles the busy race to cheer,
And new-born pleasure brings to happier men;
The fields to all their wonted tribute bear;
To warm their little loves the birds complain;
I fruitless mourn to him that cannot hear,
And weep the more, because I weep in vain.

This little composition has suffered a sort of notoriety

from the fact that Wordsworth, in 1800, selected it as an example of the errors of an ornate style, doing so because, as he frankly admitted, "Gray stands at the head of those who by their reasonings have attempted to widen the space of separation betwixt Prose and Metrical composition, and was more than any other man curiously elaborate in the structure of his own poetic diction." Wordsworth declares that out of the fourteen lines of this poem only five are of any value, namely the sixth, seventh, eighth, thirteenth, and fourteenth, the language of which "differs in no respect from that of prose." But this does not appear to be particularly ingenuous. If we allow the sun to be called Phœbus, and if we pardon the "green attire," there is not a single expression in the sonnet which is fantastic or pompous. It is simplicity itself in comparison with most of Milton's sonnets, and it seems as though Wordsworth might have found an instance of fatuous grandiloquence much fitter to his hand in Young, or better still in Armstrong, master of those who go about to call a hat a "swart sombrero." Gray's graceful sonnet was plainly the result of his late study of Petrarch, and we may remind ourselves, in this age of flourishing sonneteers, that it is almost the only specimen of its class that had been written in English for a hundred years, certainly the only one that is still read with pleasure. One other fact may be noted, that in this little poem Gray first begins to practise the quatrain of alternate heroics, which later on became, as we shall see, the basis of all his harmonic effects, and which he learned to fashion with more skill than any other poet before or since.

In the same month of August was written the *Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College*, or, as in Gray's own MS. which I have examined, of *Eton College, Windsor, and the*

adjacent country. East and west from the church of Stoke-Pogis, towards Stoke Green in the one direction and towards Farnham Royal in the other, there rises a gentle acclivity, from which the ground gradually slopes southward to the Thames, and which lies opposite those "distant spires" and "antique towers" which Gray has sung in melodious numbers. The woodland parish of Stoke is full of little rights-of-way, meadow-paths without hedges, that skirt the breast of the ridge I speak of, and reveal against the southern sky the embattled outline of Windsor. The *Eton Ode* is redolent of Stoke-Pogis, and to have sauntered where Gray himself must have muttered his verses as they took shape, gives the reader a certain sense of confidence in the poet's sincerity. Gray had of late been much exercised about Eton; to see a place so full of reminiscences, and yet be too distant to have news of it, this was provoking to his fancy. In his last letter to West he starts the reflection that he developed a few months later in the *Ode*. It puzzled him to think that Lord Sandwich and Lord Halifax, whom he could remember as "dirty boys playing at cricket," were now statesmen, while, "as for me, I am never a bit the older, nor the bigger, nor the wiser than I was then, no, not for having been beyond the sea." Lord Sandwich, of course, as all readers of lampoons remember, remained Gray's pet aversion to the end of his life, the type to him of the man who, without manners, or parts, or character, could force his way into power by the sheer insolence of wealth. The *Eton Ode* was inspired by the regret that the illusions of boyhood, the innocence that comes not of virtue but of inexperience, the sweetness born not of a good heart but of a good digestion, the elation which childish spirits give and which owes nothing to anger or

dissipation, that these simple qualities cannot be preserved through life. Gray was, or thought he was, "never a bit the older" than he was at Eton, and it seemed to him that the world would be better if Lord Sandwich could have been kept for ever in the same infantile simplicity. This description of the joyous innocence of boyhood, a theme requiring indeed the optimism of a Pangloss, has never been surpassed as an *ex parte* statement on the roseate and ideal side of the question ; that the view of ethics is quite elementary, and would have done honour to the experience and science of one of Gray's good old aunts, detracts in no sense from the positive beauty of the poem as a strain of reflection ; and it has enjoyed a popularity with successive generations which puts it almost outside the pale of verbal criticism. When a short ode of one hundred lines has enriched our language with at least three phrases which have become part and parcel of our daily speech, it may be taken for granted that it is very admirably worded. Indeed the *Eton Ode* is one of those poems which have suffered from a continued excess of popularity, and its famous felicities, "to snatch a fearful joy," "regardless of their doom, the little victims play," "where ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise," have suffered the extreme degradation as well as the loftiest honour which attends on passages of national verse, since they have been so universally extolled that they have finally become commonplace witticisms to the million. It is well to take the stanza in which such a phrase occurs, and read it anew, with a determination to forget that one of its lines has been almost effaced in vulgar traffic :—

While some on earnest business bent
Their murmuring labours ply
'Gainst graver hours that bring constraint
To sweeten liberty,

Some bold adventurers disdain
The limits of their little reign,
And unknown regions dare descry ;
Still as they run they look behind,
They hear a voice in every wind,
And snatch a fearful joy.

It is only in the second stanza of the *Eton Ode* that Gray permits himself to refer to the constant pressure of regret for his lost friend ; the fields are beloved in vain, and in Wordsworth's exquisite phrase, he turns to share the rapture,—ah ! with whom ? In yet one other poem composed during this prolific month of August 1742, that regret serves simply to throw a veil of serious and pathetic sentiment over the tone of the reflection. The *Ode on Adversity*, so named by Gray himself and by his first editor Mason, but since styled, I know not why, the *Hymn to Adversity*, is remarkable as the first of Gray's poems in which he shows that stateliness of movement and pomp of allegorical illustration which give an individuality in his mature style. No English poet, except perhaps Milton and Shelley, has maintained the same severe elevation throughout a long lyrical piece ; perhaps the fragments of such lyrists as Simonides gave Gray the hint of this pure and cold manner of writing. The shadowy personages of allegory throng around us, and we are not certain that we distinguish them from one another. The indifferent critic may be supposed to ask, which is Prosperity and which is Folly, and how am I to distinguish them from the Summer Friend and from Thoughtless Joy ? Adversity herself is an abstraction which has few terrors and few allurements for us, and in listening to the address made to her by the poet, we are apt to forget her in our appreciation of the balanced rhythm and rich persuasive sound :—

Wisdom in sable garb arrayed,
Immersed in rapt'rous thought profound,
And Melancholy, silent maid,
With leaden eye that loves the ground,
Still on thy solemn steps attend ;
Warm Charity, the general friend,
With Justice, to herself severe,
And Pity, dropping soft the sadly-pleasing tear.

O gently on thy suppliant's head,
Dread goddess, lay thy chast'ning hand !
Not in thy Gorgon terrors clad,
Not circled with the vengeful band
(As by the impious thou art seen)
With thund'ring voice, and threat'ning mien,
With screaming Horror's funeral cry,
Despair, and fell Disease, and ghastly Poverty.

Thy form benign, O Goddess, wear,
Thy milder influence impart,
Thy philosophic train be there,
To soften, not to wound, my heart.
The gen'rous spark extinct revive,
Teach me to love, and to forgive,
Exact my own defects to scan,
What others are to feel, and know myself a Man.

This last stanza, where he gets free from the allegorical personages, is undoubtedly the best ; and the curious couplet about the "generous spark" seems to me to be probably a reference to the quarrel with Walpole. If this be thought fantastic, it must be remembered that Gray's circle of experience and emotion was unusually narrow. To return to the treatment of allegory and the peculiar style of this ode, we are confronted by the curious fact that it seems impossible to claim for these qualities, hitherto unobserved in English poetry, precedence in either Gray or Collins. Actual priority, of course, belongs to Gray, for Collins wrote nothing of a serious

nature till 1745 or 1746 ; but his *Odes*, though so similar, or rather so analogous, to Gray's, that every critic has considered them as holding a distinct place together in literature, were certainly not in any way inspired by Gray. The latter published nothing till 1747, whereas in December, 1746, Collins' precious little volume saw the light.

It is difficult to believe that Collins, at school at Winchester until 1741, at college at Oxford until 1744, could have seen any of Gray's verses, which had not then begun to circulate in MS., in the way in which long afterwards the *Elegy* and the *Bard* passed from eager hand to hand. We shall see that Gray read Collins eventually, but without interest, while Collins does not appear to have been ever conscious of Gray's existence ; there was no mutual magnetic attraction between the two poets, and we must suppose their extraordinary kinship to have been a mere accident, the result of certain forces acting simultaneously on more or less similar intellectual compounds. There was no other resemblance between them, as men, than this one gift of clear, pure, Simonidean song. Collins was simply a reed, cut short and notched by the great god Pan, for the production of enchanting flute-melodies at intervals ; but for all other human purposes a vain and empty thing indeed. In Gray the song, important as it was, seemed merely one phase of a deep and consistent character, of a brain almost universally accomplished, of a man, in short, and not of a mere musical instrument.

One more work of great importance was begun at Stoke in the autumn of 1742, the *Elegy* wrote in a *Country Church-Yard*. It is, unfortunately, impossible to say what form it originally took, or what lines or thoughts now existing in it are part of the original scheme. We shall examine this poem at length when we

reach the period of Gray's career to which it belongs in its completed form ; but as the question is often asked, and vaguely answered, where was the *Elegy* written, it may at once be said that it was begun at Stoke in October or November 1742, continued at Stoke immediately after the funeral of Gray's aunt, Miss Mary Antrobus, in November 1749, and finished at Cambridge in June 1750. And it may here be remarked as a very singular fact that the death of a valued friend seems to have been the stimulus of greatest efficacy in rousing Gray to the composition of poetry, and did in fact excite him to the completion of most of his important poems. He was a man who had a very slender hold on life himself, who walked habitually in the Valley of the Shadow of Death, and whose periods of greatest vitality were those in which bereavement proved to him, that, melancholy as he was, even he had something to lose and to regret.

It is therefore perhaps more than a strong impression that makes me conjecture the beginning of the *Elegy wrote in a Country Church-Yard* to date from the funeral of Gray's uncle, Jonathan Rogers, who died at Stoke-Pogis on the 21st of October, 1742, and who was buried with the Antrobus family in the church of the neighbouring parish of Burnham. An ingenious Latin inscription to him, in a marble tablet in the church of that name, has always been ascribed to Gray himself. Rogers died at the age of sixty-five, having spent thirty-two years in undisturbed felicity with his wife, born Anna Antrobus, who survived him till near the end of her celebrated nephew's life. The death of Mr. Rogers completely altered Gray's prospects. Mrs. Rogers appears to have been left with a very small fortune, just enough to sup-

port her and her sisters Mrs. Gray and Miss Antrobus, in genteel comfort, if they shared a house together, and had no extraneous expenses. The ladies from Cornhill accordingly came down to West End House at Stoke, and there the three sisters lived until their respective deaths. But Gray's dream of a life of lettered ease was at an end; he saw that what would support these ladies would leave but little margin for him. His temperament and his mode of study shut him out from every energetic profession. He was twenty-five years of age, and hitherto had not so much as begun any serious study of the law, for which his mother still imagined him to be preparing. Only one course was open to him, namely, to return to Cambridge, where living was very cheap, and to reside in college, spending his vacations quietly at Stoke Pogis. As Mason puts it, "he was too delicate to hurt two persons for whom he had so tender an affection, by peremptorily declaring his real intentions, and therefore changed, or pretended to change, the line of his study." Henceforward, until 1759, his whole life was a regular oscillation between Stoke and Cambridge, varied only by occasional visits to London. The first part of his life was now over. At twenty-five Gray becomes a middle-aged man, and loses, among the libraries of the University, his last pretensions to physical elasticity. From this time forward we find that his ailments, his melancholy, his reserve, and his habit of drowning consciousness in perpetual study, have taken firm hold upon him, and he begins to plunge into an excess of reading, treating the acquisition of knowledge as a narcotic. In the winter of 1742 he proceeded to Peterhouse, and taking his bachelor's degree in Civil Law, was forthwith installed as a resident of that college.

CHAPTER IV.

LIFE AT CAMBRIDGE.

GRAY took up his abode at Peterhouse, in the room nearest the road on the second floor on the north side, a room which still exists and which commands a fine view of Pembroke College further east, on the opposite side of Trumpington Street. It would seem, indeed, that Gray's eyes and thoughts were for ever away from home, and paying a visit to the society across the road. His letters are full of minute discussions of what is going on at Pembroke, but never a word of Peterhouse ; indeed so naturally and commonly does he discuss the politics of the former college, often without naming it, that all his biographers, except of course Mason, seem to have taken for granted that he was describing Peterhouse. Oddly enough, Mason, who might have explained this circumstance in half a dozen words, does not appear to have noticed the fact, so natural did it seem to him to read about events which went on in his own college of Pembroke. Nor is it explained why Gray never became a fellow of Peterhouse. In all the correspondence of Gray I have only noted one solitary instance in which he has mentioned a Petrusian ; on this one occasion he does name the Master, J. Whalley, afterwards Bishop of Chester, in connexion with an anecdote which does more honour to him as a kind old

soul than as a disciplinarian. But all Gray's friends, and enemies, and interests, were centered in Pembroke, and he shows such an intimate knowledge of all the cabals and ridiculous little intrigues which thrilled the common-room of that college, as requires an explanation that now can never be given. These first years of his residence are the most obscure in his whole career. It must be remembered that of his three most intimate correspondents one, West, was dead, another, Walpole, estranged, and the third, Wharton, a resident in Cambridge like himself, and therefore too near at hand to be written to. On the 27th of December, 1742, a few days after his arrival at the university, he wrote a letter to Dr. Wharton, which has been preserved, and his *Hymn to Ignorance*, Mason tells us, dates from the same time. But after this he entirely disappears from us for a couple of years, a few legends of the direction taken by his studies and his schemes of literary work being the only glimpses we get of him.

But although Gray tells us nothing about his own college, it is still possible to form a tolerably distinct idea of the society with whom he moved at Pembroke. The Master, Dr. Roger Long, was a man of parts, but full of eccentricities, and gifted with a very disagreeable temper. He was a species of poetaster, oddly associated in verse, at different extremes of his long life, with Laurence Eusden, the poet laureate, and the great Erasmus Darwin. When Gray settled in the University, Roger Long was sixty-two years of age, had been Master of Pembroke nine years, and, after being appointed Lowndes' Professor of astronomy in 1750, was to survive until 1770, dying in his ninety-first year. He was fond of exercising his invention on lumbering constructions, which provoked the ridi-

cule of young wits like Gray; such as a sort of orrery which he built in the north-eastern corner of the inner court of Pembroke; and a still more remarkable water-velocipede, upon which Dr. Long was wont to splash about in Pembroke basin, "like a wild goose at play," heedless of mocking undergraduates. This eccentric personage was the object of much observation on the part of Gray, who frequently mentioned him in his letters, and was delighted when any new absurdity gave him an opportunity of writing to his correspondents about "the high and mighty Prince Roger surnamed the Long, Lord of the great Zodiac, the glass Uranium, and the Chariot that goes without horses." As the astronomer grew older, he more and more lost his authority with the fellows, and Gray describes scenes of absolute rebellion which are, I believe, recorded by no other historian. Gray was, undoubtedly in possession of information denied to the rest of the world. Part of this information came, we cannot doubt, from Dr. Wharton, and part from another intimate friend of Gray's, William Trollope, who had taken his degree in 1730, and who was one of the senior fellows of Pembroke. Another excellent friend of Gray's, also a leading man at Pembroke, was the gentle and refined Dr. James Brown, who eventually succeeded Long in the mastership, and in whose arms Gray died. Outside this little Pembroke circle Gray had few associates. He knew Conyers Middleton very well, and seems to have gained, a little later, while haunting the rich library of Emmanuel College, the acquaintance of a man whose influence on him was distinctly hurtful, the satellite of Warburton, Richard Hurd, long afterwards Bishop of Worcester. But his association with Conyers Middleton, certainly one of the most remarkable men then moving in the University, amounted almost

to friendship. They probably met nearly every day, Middleton being University Librarian; there was much that Gray would find sympathetic in the broad theology of Middleton, who had won his spurs by attacking the deists from ground almost as sceptical as their own, yet strictly within the pale of orthodoxy; nor would the irony and free thought of a champion of the Church of England be shocking to Gray, whose own tenets were at this time no less broad than his hatred of an open profession of deism was pronounced. Gray's feeling in religion seems to have been one of high and dry objection to enthusiasm, or change, or subversion. He was willing to admit a certain breadth of conjecture, so long as the forms of orthodoxy were preserved, but he objected excessively to any attempt to tamper with those forms, collecting Shaftesbury, Voltaire, Rousseau, and Hume under one general category of abhorrence. As he says in a cancelled stanza of one of his poems:—

No more, with reason and thyself at strife,
Give anxious cares and endless wishes room;
But through the cool sequester'd vale of life
Pursue the silent tenour of thy doom,

an attitude which would not preclude a good deal of sympathy with the curious speculations of Conyers Middleton.

There is no doubt, however, that, in spite of a few companions of this class, most of them, like Middleton, much older than himself, he found Cambridge exceedingly dreary. He talks in one of his letters of "the strong attachment, or rather allegiance, which I and all here owe to our sovereign lady and mistress, the president of presidents, and head of heads (if I may be permitted to pronounce her name, that ineffable Octogrammaton), the

power of *Laziness*. You must know that she has been pleased to appoint me (in preference to so many old servants of hers, who had spent their whole lives in qualifying themselves for the office) Grand Picker of Straws and Push-Pin Player in ordinary to her Supinity." This in 1744, and the same note had been struck two years earlier in his curiously splenetic *Hymn to Ignorance* :—

Hail, horrors, hail! ye ever gloomy bowers,
Ye Gothic fanes, and antiquated towers,
Where rushy Camus' slowly-winding flood
Perpetual draws his humid train of mud:
Glad I revisit thy neglected reign,
O take me to thy peaceful shade again.

This atmosphere of apathy and ignorance was by no means favourable to the composition of poetry. It was, indeed absolutely fatal to it, and being at liberty to write odes any hour of any day completely took away from the poet the inclination to compose them at all. The flow of verse which had been so full and constant in 1742 ceased abruptly and entirely, and his thoughts turned in a wholly fresh direction. He gave himself up almost exclusively for the first four or five years to a consecutive study of the whole existing literature of ancient Greece. If he had seen cause to lament the deadness of classical enterprise at Cambridge when he was an undergraduate, this lethargy had become still more universal since the death of Bentley and Snape. Gray insisted, almost in solitude, on the necessity of persistence in the cultivation of Greek literature, and he forms the link between the school of humanity which flourished in Cambridge in the beginning of the eighteenth century, and that of which Porson was to be the representative.

One of Gray's earliest schemes was a critical text

of Strabo, an author of whom he knew no satisfactory edition. Among the Pembroke MSS. may still be found his painstaking and copious notes collected for this purpose, and Mason possessed in Gray's handwriting "a great number of geographical disquisitions, particularly with respect to that part of Asia which comprehends Persia and India; concerning the ancient and modern names and divisions of which extensive countries his notes are very copious." This edition of Strabo never came to the birth, and the same has to be said of his projected Plato, the notes for every section of which were in existence when Mason came to examine his papers. Another labour over which he toiled in vain was a text of the Greek Anthology, with translations of each separate epigram into Latin elegiac verse, a task on which he wasted months of valuable time, and which he then abandoned. His MS., however, of this last-mentioned work, came into his executors' hands, copied out as if for the press, with the addition, even, of a very full index, and it is a little surprising that Mason should not have hastened to oblige the world of classical students with a work which would have had a value at that time that it could not be said to possess now-a-days. Lord Chesterfield confidently "recommends the Greek epigrams to the supreme contempt" of his precious son, and in so doing gauged rightly enough the taste of the age. It would seem that Gray had the good sense to enjoy the delicious little poems of Meleager and his fellow-singers, but had not moral energy enough to insist on forcing them upon the attention of the world. He lamented, too, the neglect into which Aristotle had fallen, and determined to restore him to the notice of English scholars. As in the previous cases, however, his intentions remained unfulfilled, and

we turn with pleasure from the consideration of all this melancholy waste of energy and learning. It is hard to conceive of a sadder irony on the career of a scholar of Gray's genius and accomplishment than is given by the dismal contents of the so-called second volume of his *Works*, published by Mathias in 1814, fragments and jottings which bear the same relation to literature that dough bears to bread.

The unfortunate difference with Horace Walpole came to a close in the winter of 1744. A lady, probably Mrs. Conyers Middleton, made peace between the friends. Walpole expressed a desire that Gray would write to him, and as Gray was passing through London on his way from Cambridge to Stoke in the early part of November, a meeting came off. The poet wrote Walpole a note as soon as he arrived, "and immediately received a very civil answer." Horace Walpole was then living in the ministerial neighbourhood of Arlington Street, and thither on the following evening Gray went to visit him. Gray's account to Wharton of the interview is entertaining: "I was somewhat abashed at his confidence ; he came to meet me, kissed me on both sides with all the ease of one who receives an acquaintance just come out of the country, squatted me into a fauteuil, began to talk of the town, and this and that and t'other, and continued with little interruption for three hours, when I took my leave very indifferently pleased, but treated with monstrous good breeding. I supped with him next night, as he desired. Ashton was there, whose formalities tickled me inwardly, for he, I found, was to be angry about the letter I had wrote him. However, in going home together our hackney-coach jumbled us up into a sort of reconciliation. . . . Next morning I breakfasted alone with Mr. Walpole ; when we

had all the *éclaircissement* I ever expected, and I left him much better satisfied than I had been hitherto." Gray's pride we see struggling against a very hearty desire in Walpole to let bygones be bygones; the stately little poet, however, was not able to hold out against so many courteous seductions, and he gradually returned to his old intimacy and affection for Walpole. It is nevertheless doubtful whether he ever became so fond of the latter as Walpole was of him. He accepted the homage, however, to the end of his days, and was more admired perhaps, by Horace Walpole, and for a longer period, than any other person.

Perhaps in consequence of the "*éclaircissement*" with Walpole, Gray began at this time a correspondence with Mr. Chute and Mr. Whithead, the gentlemen with whom he had spent some months in Venice. Chute was a Hampshire squire, a dozen years senior to Gray and Walpole, but a great admirer of them both, and they both wrote to him some of their brightest letters. Chute was what our Elizabethan forefathers called "*Italianate*;" he sympathized with Gray's tastes in music and statuary, vowed that life was not worth living north of the Alps, and spent the greater part of his time in Casa Ambrosio, Sir Horace Mann's house in Florence. He was an accomplished person, who played and sang, and turned a neat copy of verses, and altogether was a very agreeable exception among country gentlemen. He lived on until 1776, carefully preserving the letters he had interchanged with his sprightly friends.

About this time (May 30, 1744) Pope had died, and both Gray and Walpole refer frequently to the circumstance in their letters. It seems that Gray had had at least one interview with the great poet

of the age before him, an interview the date of which it would be curious to ascertain. Gray's words are interesting. He writes to Walpole (Feb. 3, 1746), referring probably to the scandals about Atossa and the *Patriot King*, "I can say no more for Mr. Pope, for what you keep in reserve may be worse than all the rest. It is natural to wish the finest writer,—one of them,—we ever had, should be an honest man. It is for the interest even of that virtue, whose friend he professed himself, and whose beauties he sung, that he should not be found a dirty animal. But, however, this is Mr. Warburton's business, not mine, who may scribble his pen to the stumps and all in vain, if these facts are so. *It is not from what he told me about himself* that I thought well of him, but from a humanity and goodness of heart, aye, and greatness of mind, that runs through his private correspondence, not less apparent than are a thousand little vanities and weaknesses mixed with those good qualities, for nobody ever took him for a philosopher." There exists a book in which Pope has written his own name, and Gray his underneath, with a date in Pope's lifetime. Evidently there had been personal intercourse between them, in which Walpole may have had a part; for the latter said, very late in his own career, "Remember, I have lived with Gray and seen Pope."

In 1744 appeared two poems of some importance in the history of eighteenth century literature, Akenside's *Pleasures of the Imagination* and Armstrong's *Art of Preserving Health*. Gray read them instantly, for the authors were friends of his friend Wharton. The first he found often obscure and even unintelligible, but yet in many respects admirable; and he checked himself in the act of criticizing Akenside, "a very ingenious man,

worth fifty of myself." For Armstrong he showed less interest. The reading of these and other poems, a fresh beat of the pulse of English poetry in her fainting fit, set him thinking of his own neglected epic, the *De Principiis Cogitandi*, or "Master Tommy Lucretius" as he nicknamed it. This unwieldy production, however, could not be encouraged to flourish: "'tis but a puleing chitt," says its author, and Mason tells us that about this time the posthumous publication of the *Anti-Lucretius* of the Cardinal Melchior de Polignac, a book long awaited and received at last with great disappointment, made Gray decide to let Locke and the Origin of Ideas alone. It may be noted that in July 1745 Gray had serious thoughts, which came to nothing, of moving over from Peterhouse to Trinity Hall.

We get glimpses of him now and then, from his letters. He does not entirely forget the pleasures of "strumming," he tells Chute; "I look at my music now and then, that I may not forget it;" and in September 1746 he has been writing "a few autumnal verses," the exact nature of which it is now impossible to specify. In August of the same year he had been in London, spending his mornings with Walpole in Arlington Street, and his afternoons at the trial of the Jacobite Lords. His account of Kilmarnock and Cromartie is vivid, and not as unsympathetic as it might be. Now, as for many years to come, Gray usually went up to town in the middle of June, saw what was to be seen, proceeded to Stoke, and returned to Cambridge in September. Late in August 1746 Horace Walpole took a house within the precincts of the Castle of Windsor, and Gray at Stoke found this very convenient, for the friends were able to spend one day of each week together. In

May 1747 Walpole rented, and afterwards bought, that estate on the north bank of the Thames which he has made famous under the name of Strawberry Hill, and in future Gray scarcely ever passed a long vacation without spending some of his time there. It was now that his first poem was published. Walpole persuaded him to allow Dodsley to print the *Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College*, and it accordingly appeared anonymously, in the summer of 1747, as a thin folio pamphlet. In the autumn of this same year, while Gray was Walpole's guest at Strawberry Hill, he sat for the most pleasing, though the most feminine of his portraits, that by John Giles Eckhardt, a German who had come over with Vanloo, and to whom Walpole had addressed his poem of *The Beauties*. The *Eton Ode* fell perfectly stillborn, in spite of Walpole's enthusiasm; even less observed by the critics of the hour than Collins' little volume of *Odes*, which had appeared six months earlier. We may observe that Gray was now thirty years of age, and not only absolutely unknown, but not in the least persuaded in himself that he ought to be known.

It seems to have been about this time that the remarkable interview took place between Gray and Hogarth. The great painter, now in his fiftieth year, had just reached the summit of his reputation by completing his *Marriage à la Mode*, which Gray admired like the rest of the world. The vivacious Walpole thought that he would bring these interesting men together, and accordingly arranged a little dinner, from which he anticipated no small intellectual diversion. Unfortunately Hogarth was more surly and egotistical than usual, and Gray was plunged in one of his fits of melancholy reserve, so that Walpole had to rely entirely upon his own flow of spirits

to prevent absolute silence, and vowed at the end of the repast that he had never been so dull in his life. To show, however, how Gray could sparkle when the cloud happened to rise from off his spirits, we may quote entire the delightful letter to Walpole, in which one of the brightest of his lesser poems first appeared :—

Cambridge, March 1, 1747.

As one ought to be particularly careful to avoid blunders in a compliment of condolence, it would be a sensible satisfaction to me, before I testify my sorrow, and the sincere part I take in your misfortune, to know for certain who it is I lament. I knew Zara and Selima (Selima, was it P or Fatima ?), or rather I knew them both together; for I cannot justly say which was which. Then as to your "handsome Cat," the name you distinguish her by, I am no less at a loss, as well knowing one's handsome cat is always the cat one loves best; or if one be alive and one dead, it is usually the latter that is the handsomest. Besides, if the point were never so clear, I hope you do not think me so ill-bred or so imprudent as to forfeit all my interest in the survivor; oh, no! I would rather seem to mistake, and imagine to be sure it must be the tabby one that had met with this sad accident. Till this matter is a little better determined, you will excuse me if I do not begin to cry :—

"Tempus inane peto, requiem, spatiumque doloris."

Which interval is the more convenient, as it gives me time to rejoice with you on your new honours [Walpole had just been elected F.R.S.]. This is only a beginning; I reckon next week we shall hear you are a free-mason, or a Gormagon at least. Heigh ho! I feel (as you to be sure have long since) that I have very little to say, at least in prose. Somebody will be the better for it; I do not mean you, but your Cat, *seu* Mademoiselle Selime, whom I am about to immortalize for one week or fortnight, as follows :—

'Twas on a lofty wall's side
 Where China's gayest art had dyed
 The azure flowers that blow,
 The pensive Selima reclined,
 Demurest of the rabby kind,
 Gaz'd on the lake below.

Her conscious tail her joy declar'd ;
 The fair round face, the snowy beard,
 The velvet of her paws,
 Her coat that with the tortoise vies,
 Her ears of jet, and emerald eyes,
 She saw ; and purr'd applause.

Still had she gaz'd ; but midst the tide
 Two beauteous forms were seen to glide,
 The Genii of the stream ;
 Their scaly armour's Tyrian hue,
 Through richest purple, to the view
 Betray'd a golden gleam.

The hapless Nymph with wonder saw :
 A whisker first, and then a claw,
 With many an ardent wish,
 She stretch'd, in vain, to reach the prize.
 What female heart can gold despise ?
 What Cat's averse to fish ?

Presumptuous maid ! With looks intent
 Again she stretched, again she bent,
 Nor knew the gulf between,
 (Malignant Fate sat by, and smil'd.)
 The slipp'ry verge her feet beguil'd,
 She tumbled headlong in.

Eight times emerging from the flood,
 She mew'd to ev'ry wat'ry God ;
 Some speedy aid to send.
 No Dolphin came, no Nereid stirr'd,
 No cruel Tom nor Harry heard,
 What favourite has a friend ?

From hence, ye beauties, undeceiv'd,
Know one false step is ne'er retriev'd,
And be with caution bold.
Not all that tempts your wand'ring eyes
And heedless hearts is lawful prize,
Nor all, that glisters, gold.

There's a poem for you ; it is rather too long for an Epitaph.

It is rather too long for a quotation, also, but the reader may find some entertainment in seeing so familiar a poem restored to its original readings. Johnson's comment on this piece is more unfortunate than usual. He calls it "a trifle, but not a happy trifle." Later critics have been unanimous in thinking it one of the happiest of all trifles ; and there can be no doubt that in its ease and lightness it shows that Gray had been reading Gresset and Piron to advantage, and that he remembered the gay suppers with Mdlle. Quinault. A French poet of the neatest class, however, would certainly have avoided the specious little error detected by Johnson in the last line, and would not have laid himself open to the charge of supposing that what cats really like is not gold-fish, but gold itself.

We must return, however, to the dreary days in which Gray divided his leisure from Greek literature between drinking tar-water, on the recommendation of Berkeley's *Siris*, and observing the extraordinary quarrelling and bickering which went on in the combination-room at Pembroke. These dissensions reached a climax in the summer of 1746. The cause of the Master, Dr. Roger Long, was supported by a certain Dr. Andrews, while James Brown, popularly styled Obadiah Fusk, led the body of the fellows, with whom Gray sympathized. "Mr. Brown wants nothing but a foot in height and his

own hair to make him a little old Roman," we are told in August of that year, and has been so determined that the Master talks of calling in the Attorney-General to decide. Even in the Long Vacation fellows of Pembroke can talk of nothing else, and "tremble while they speak." Tuthill, for some occult reason, is threatened with the loss of his fellowship, and Gray at Stoke, in September 1746, will hurry to Cambridge at any moment, so as not to be absent during the Pembroke audit.

All this time not one word is said of his own college. Nor was he always so anxious to return to Cambridge. In the winter of 1746 he had a very bright spell of enjoyment in London. "I have been in town," he says to Wharton (Dec. 11th), "flaunting about at public places of all kinds with my two Italianized friends [Chute and Whithead]. The world itself has some attractions in it to a solitary of six years' standing; and agreeable, well-meaning people of sense (thank Heaven there are so few of them) are my peculiar magnet; it is no wonder, then, if I felt some reluctance at parting with them so soon, or if my spirits, when I return to my cell, should sink for a time, not indeed to storm or tempest, but a good deal below changeable." He was considerably troubled by want of money at this time; he had been to town partly to sell off a little stock, to pay an old debt, and had found the rate of exchange so low that he would have lost twelve per cent. He was saved from this necessity by a timely loan from Wharton. He spent his leisure at Christmas in making a great chronological table, the form of which long afterwards suggested to Henry Clinton his *Fasti Hellenici*. Gray's work began with the 30th Olympiad, and was brought down to the 113th, covering therefore 332

years. Each page of it was divided into nine columns, one for the Olympiad, the second for the Archons, the third for the public affairs of Greece, the fourth, fifth and sixth for the Philosophers, the seventh for the Poets, the eighth for the Historians, and the ninth for the Orators.

The same letter which announces this performance mentions the *Odes* of Collins and Joseph Warton. Gray had been briskly supplied with these little books, which had only been published a few days before. The former was the important volume, but the public bought the latter. Gray's comment on Warton and Collins is remarkable: "Each is the half of a considerable man, and one the counterpart of the other. The first has but little invention, very poetical choice of expression, and a good ear. The second, a fine fancy, modelled upon the antique, a bad ear, great variety of words and images, with no choice at all. They both deserve to last some years, *but will not.*" This last clause is an example of the vanity of prophesying. It is difficult to understand what Gray meant by accusing Collins of a "bad ear," the one thing in which Collins was undoubtedly Gray's superior; in other respects the criticism, though unsympathetic, is not without acumen, and for bad or good, was the most favourable thing said of Collins for many years to come. In 1748 Gray and Collins were destined to meet, for once during their lives, between the covers of the same book, at which we shall presently arrive.

Gray was thirty years old on the day that he read Collins' *Odes*. He describes himself as "lazy and listless and old and vexed and perplexed," with all human evils but the gout, which was soon to follow. The proceedings at Pembroke had reached such a pass that Gray

began to sympathize with the poor old Master, him of the water-velocipede. The fellows had now grown so rebellious as to abuse him roundly to his face, never to go into combination-room till he went out, or if he entered while they were there to continue sitting even in his own magisterial chair. They would bicker with him about twenty paltry matters, till he would lose his temper, and tell them they were impertinent. Gray turned from all this to a scheme which he had long had in view, the publication of his friend West's poems. Walpole proposed that he should bring out these and his own odes in a single volume, and Gray was not disinclined to carry out this notion. But when he came to put their "joint-stock" together, he found it insufficient in bulk. Nor, as we have already seen, did the few and scattered verses of West see the light till long after the death of Gray. All that came of this talk of printing, was the anonymous publication of the *Eton Ode*. Meanwhile, as he says to Wharton, in March 1747, "my works are not so considerable as you imagine. I have read Pausanias and Athenæus all through, and Æschylus again. I am now in Pindar and Lysias, for I take Verse and Prose together like bread and cheese."

About this time the excellent Wharton married and left Cambridge. A still worse misfortune happened to Gray in the destruction of his house in Cornhill, which was burned down in May 1748. He seems to have been waked up a little by this disaster, and to have spent seven weeks in town as the guest of various friends, who were "all so sorry for my loss that I could not choose but laugh: one offered me opera tickets, insisted upon carrying me to the grand masquerade, desired me to sit for my picture; others asked me to

their concerts, or dinners and suppers at their houses; or hoped I would drink chocolate with them while I stayed in town. All my gratitude,—or, if you please, my revenge,—was to accept everything they offered me; if it had been but a shilling I should have taken it: thank Heaven, I was in good spirits, else I could not have done it." London was amusing for him at this time, with Horace Walpole flying between Arlington Street and Strawberry Hill, and Chute and his nephew Whithead full of sprightly gaieties and always glad to see him. Whithead, who was in the law, undertook with success about this time some legal business for Gray, the exact nature of which does not appear, and the poet describes him as "a fine young personage in a coat all over spangles, just come over from the tour of Europe to take possession and be married. Say I wish him more spangles, and more estates, and more wives." Poor Whithead did not live long enough to marry one wife; while his engagement loitered on he fell ill of a galloping consumption, and died in 1751, his death being accelerated by the imprudence of his brother, a clergyman, who insisted on taking him out hunting when he ought to have been in bed. Gray's house in Cornhill had been insured for 500*l.*, but the expenses of rebuilding it amounted to 650*l.* One of his aunts, probably Miss Antrobus, made him a present of 100*l.*; another aunt, still more probably Mrs. Oliffe, lent him an equal sum for his immediate wants on a decent rate of interest, and for the remainder he was indebted to the kindness of Wharton. It appears from all this that Gray's income was strictly bounded, at that time, to his actual expenses, and that he had no margin whatever. He declined, in fact, in June 1748, an invitation from Dr. Wharton to come and stay with him in the

north of England, on the ground that "the good people here [at Stoke] would think me the most careless and ruinous of mortals, if I should think of a journey at this time."

In the letter from which a quotation has just been given, Gray mentions for the first time a man whose name was to be inseparably associated with his own, without whose pious care for his memory, indeed, the task of writing Gray's life in any detail would be impossible. In the year 1747 Gray's attention was directed by a friend to a modest publication of verses in imitation of Milton; the death of Pope was sung in an elegy called *Musæus*, to resemble *Lycidas*, and Milton's odes found counterparts in *Il Bellicoso* and *Il Pacifico*. These pieces, which were not entirely without a meritorious ease of metre, were the production of William Mason, a young man of twenty-two, the son of a Yorkshire clergyman, and a scholar of St. John's College, Cambridge. His intelligence first attracted the notice of a fellow of his own college, Dr. William Heberden, the distinguished Professor of Medicine, who was a friend of Gray, and who was very possibly the person who showed Mason's poems to the latter. In the course of the same year, 1747, through the exertions of Heberden and Gray, Mason was nominated a fellow of Pembroke, and proposed to himself to enter that remarkable bear-garden. But Dr. Roger Long refused his consent, and it was not until February 1749, and after much litigation, that Mason was finally elected.

There was something about Mason which Gray liked, a hearty simplicity and honest ardour that covered a good deal of push which Gray thought vulgar and did not hesitate to chastise. Mason, on his side, was a faithful and affectionate henchman, full of undisguised admira-

tion of Gray and fear of his sarcasm, not unlike Boswell in his persistence, and in his patience in enduring the reproofs of the great man. Gray constantly crushed Mason, but the latter was never offended, and after a few tears, returned manfully to the charge. Gray's description of him in the second year of their acquaintance, when Mason was only twenty-three, was this:—"Mason has much fancy, little judgment, and a good deal of modesty. I take him for a good and well-meaning creature; but then he is really in simplicity a child, and loves everybody he meets with; he reads little or nothing, writes abundance, and that with a desire to make his fortune by it." This literary fluency was a matter of wonder to Gray, whose own attar of roses was distilled slowly and painfully, drop by drop, and all through life he was apt to overrate Mason's verses. It was very difficult, of course, for him to feel unfavourably towards a friend so enthusiastic and so anxious to please, and we cannot take Gray's earnest approval of Mason's odes and tragedies too critically. Moreover, he was Gray's earliest and most slavish disciple; before he left St. John's to come within the greater poet's more habitual influence, he had begun to imitate poems which he can only have seen in manuscript.

Henceforward, in spite of his somewhat coarse and superficial nature, in spite of his want of depth in imagination and soundness in scholarship, in spite of a general want of the highest qualities of character, Mason became a great support and comfort to Gray. His physical vigour and versatility, his eagerness in the pursuit of literature, his unselfish ardour and loyalty, were refreshing to the more fastidious and retiring man, who enjoyed, moreover, the chance of having at last

found a person with whom he could discourse freely about literature, in that constant easy interchange of impressions which is the luxury of a purely literary life. Moreover, we must do Mason the justice to say that he supplied to Gray's fancy whatever stimulus such a mind as his was calculated to offer, receiving his smallest and most fragmentary effusions with interest, encouraging him to the completion of his poems, and receiving each fresh ode as if a new planet had risen above the horizon. With Walpole to be playful with, and Mason to be serious with, Gray was no longer for the rest of his life exposed to that east wind of solitary wretchedness which had parched him for the first three years of his life at Cambridge. At the same time, grateful as we must be to Mason for his affection and goodheartedness, we cannot refrain from wishing that his poems had been fastened to a millstone and cast into the river Cam. They are not only barren and pompous to the very last degree, but to the lovers of Gray they have this disadvantage that they constantly resolve that poet's true sublime into the ridiculous, and leave on the ear an uncomfortable echo, as of a too successful burlesque or parody. Of this Gray himself was not unconscious, though he put the thought behind him, as one inconsistent with friendship.

A disreputable personage who crossed Gray's orbit about this time, and was the object of his cordial dislike and contempt, has left on the mind of posterity a sense of higher natural gifts than any possessed by the respectable Mason. Christopher Smart, long afterwards author of the *Song to David*, was an idle young man who had been admitted to Pembroke in October 1739, under the protection of the Earl of Darlington, and who in

1745 was elected a fellow of his college. As early as 1740 he began to be celebrated for the wit and originality of his Latin tripos verses, of which a series are still in existence. One of these, a droll celebration of the Nativity of Yawning, is not unlike Gray's own *Hymn to Ignorance* in its contempt for the genius of Cambridge. But Smart lost credit by his pranks and levities no less quickly than he gained it by his skill. Gray writes in March 1747 that Smart's debts are increasing daily, and that he drinks hartshorn from morning till night. A month later he had scandalized the university by performing in the Zodiac Room, a club which had been founded in 1725, a play of his own called a *A Trip to Cambridge, or the Grateful Fair*, a piece which was never printed and now no longer is in existence. Already, at this time, Gray thought Smart mad. "He can't hear his own Prologue without being ready to die with laughter. He acts five parts himself, and is only sorry he can't do all the rest. . . . As for his vanity and faculty of lying, they have come to their full maturity. All this, you see, must come to a jail, or Bedlam." It did come to Bedlam, in 1763, but not until Smart had exhausted every eccentricity and painful folly possible to man. But the minor catastrophe was much nearer, namely the jail. In November 1747 he was arrested at the suit of a London tailor, was got out of prison by means of a subscription made in the college, and received a sound warning to behave better in future, a warning which Gray, who watched him narrowly and noted his moral symptoms with cold severity, justly predicted would be entirely frustrated by his drunkenness.

The frequent disturbances caused in the university by such people as Smart had by this time led to much public

scandal. Gray says "the fellow commoners—the bucks—are run mad, they set women upon their heads in the streets at noon-day, break open shops, game in the coffee-houses on Sundays, and in short," he adds in angry irony, "act after my own heart." The Tuns Tavern at Cambridge was the scene of nightly orgies, in which professors and fellows set an example of roistering to the youth of the University. Heavy bills were run up at inns and coffee-houses, which were afterwards repudiated with effrontery. The breaking of windows and riots in public parts of the town were indulged in to such an extent as to make Cambridge almost intolerable, and the work of James Brown, Gray's intimate friend, who held the post of Senior Proctor, was far from being a sinecure. In 1748, the Duke of Somerset, who had absolutely neglected his responsibilities, was succeeded in the Chancellorship by the Duke of Newcastle, whose installation promised little hope of reform. Gray described the scene to Wharton:—"Every one while it lasted was very gay and very busy in the morning, and very owlsh and very tipsy at night: I make no exception from the Chancellor to blue-coat," who was the vice-chancellor's servant. However, it presently appeared that the Duke of Newcastle was not inclined to sacrifice discipline. The Bishops united with him in concocting a plan by which the licence of the resident members of the university should be checked, and in May 1750 the famous code of *Orders and Regulations* was brought before the Senate. It was not, however, easy to restore order to a community which had so long been devoted to the Lord of Misrule, and it was not until more than twenty persons of good family had been "expelled or rusticated for very heinous violations of our laws and discipline" that anything like decent behaviour was restored, the fury of the undergraduates displaying

itself in a final outburst of mutiny, in which they rushed along the streets brandishing lighted links.

This scene of rebellion and confusion could not fail to excite strong emotion in the mind of a man like Gray, of orderly tastes and timid personal character, to whom a painted Indian would be scarcely a more formidable object than a noisy young buck, flushed with wine, flinging his ash-stick against college windows, and his torch into the faces of passers-by. A life at the university given up to dice, and horses, and the loud coarse Georgian dissipation of that day, could not seem to a thinker to be one which brought glory either to the teacher or the taught, and in the midst of this sensual riot Gray sat down to write his poem on *The Alliance of Education and Government*. Of his philosophical fragments this is by far the best, and it is seriously to be regretted that it does not extend beyond one hundred and ten lines. The design of the poem, which has been preserved, is highly interesting, and the treatment at least as poetical as that of so purely didactic a theme could be. Short as it is, it attracted the warm enthusiasm of Gibbon, who ejaculates:—"instead of compiling tables of chronology and natural history, why did not Mr. Gray apply the powers of his genius to finish the philosophical poem of which he has left such an exquisite specimen?" The heroic couplet is used with great skill; as an example may be cited the lines describing the invasion of Italy by the Goths:—

As oft have issued, host impelling host,
The blue-eyed myriads from the Baltic coast;
The prostrate South to the destroyer yields
Her boasted titles and her golden fields.
With grim delight the brood of winter view
A brighter day, and heavens of azure hue,
Scent the new fragrance of the breathing rose,
And quaff the pendant vintage as it grows.

while one line, at least, lives in the memory of every lover of poetry :—

When love could teach a monarch to be wise,
And gospel-light first dawn'd from Bullen's eyes.

On the 19th of August, 1748, Gray copied the first fifty-seven lines of this poem in a letter he was writing to Wharton, saying that his object would be to show that education and government must concur in order to produce great and useful men. But as he was pursuing his plan in the leisurely manner habitual to him, Montesquieu's celebrated work *L'Esprit des Lois* was published, and fell into his hands. He found, as he told Mason, that the Baron had forestalled some of his best thoughts, and from this time forth his interest in the scheme languished and soon after it entirely lapsed. Some years later he thought of taking it up again, and was about to compose a prefatory *Ode to M. de Montesquieu* when that writer died, on the 10th of February, 1755, and the whole thing was abandoned. Gray's remarks on *L'Esprit des Lois* are in his clearest and acutest vein :—"The subject is as extensive as mankind; the thoughts perfectly new, generally admirable, as they are just; sometimes a little too refined; in short there are faults, but such as an ordinary man could never have committed: the style very lively and concise, consequently sometimes obscure,—it is the gravity of Tacitus, whom he admires, tempered with the gaiety and fire of a Frenchman." Gray was probably the only Englishman living capable of criticising a new French book with this delicate justice.

CHAPTER V.

THE ELEGY—SIX POEMS—DEATHS OF GRAY'S AUNT AND MOTHER.

EARLY in 1748 Dodsley published the first three volumes of his useful miscellany, called *A Collection of Poems*, for the plan of which he claimed an originality that it scarcely deserved, since, like the earlier miscellanies of Gildon and Tonson, it merely aimed at embracing in one work the best scattered poetry of the day. In the second volume were printed, without the author's name, three of Gray's odes—those *To Spring*, *On Mr. Walpole's Cat*, and the *Eton Ode*. Almost all the poets of this age, and several of the preceding, were contributors to the collection. Pope, Green, and Tickell represented the past generation, while Collins, Dyer, and Shenstone, in the first volume; Lyttelton, Gilbert West, I. H. Browne, and Edwards the sonneteer, in the second volume; and Joseph Warton, Garrick, Mason, and Walpole himself in the third volume, showed to the best of their ability what English poetry in that age was capable of; while three sturdy Graces, bare and bold, adorned the title-page of each instalment, and gave a kind of visible pledge that no excess of refinement should mar the singing, even when Lowth, Bishop of London, held the lyre.

As in the crisis of a national history some young man,

unknown before, leaps to the front by sheer force of character, and takes the helm of state before his elders, so in the confusion and mutiny at the University the talents of Dr. Edmund Keene, the new master of Peterhouse, came suddenly into notice, and from comparative obscurity he rose at once into the fierce light that beats upon a successful reformer. His energy and promptitude pointed him out as a fit man to become vice-chancellor in the troublous year 1749, although he was only thirty-six years of age, and it was practically owing to his quick eye and hard hand that order was reinstated in the university. With his mastership of the college Gray began to take an interest for the first time in Peterhouse, and cultivated the acquaintance of Keene, in whom he discovered an energy and practical power which he had never suspected. The reign of Mum Sharp, as the undergraduates nicknamed Keene, was as brief as it was brilliant. In 1752 the Government rewarded his action in the university with the see of Chester, and two years later he resigned his nominal headship of Peterhouse, dying Bishop of Ely nearly thirty years afterwards.

At Pembroke Hall, meanwhile, all was going well at last. In the spring of 1749 there was a pacification between the Master and the Fellows, and Pembroke, says Gray to Wharton, "is all harmonious and delightful." But the rumours of dissension had thinned the ranks of the undergraduates; "they have no boys at all, and unless you can send us a hamper or two out of the north to begin with, they will be like a few rats straggling about a deserted dwelling-house."

Gray was now about to enter the second main period of his literary activity, and he opens it with a hopeless protestation of his apathy and idleness. He writes (April

25, 1749), from Cambridge, this amusing piece of prophecy:—"The spirit of laziness, the spirit of this place, begins to possess even me, that have so long declaimed against it. Yet has it not so prevailed, but that I feel that discontent with myself, that *ennui* that ever accompanies it in its beginnings. Time will settle my conscience, time will reconcile my languid companion; we shall smoke, we shall tipple, we shall doze together, we shall have our little jokes, like other people, and our long stories. Brandy will finish what port began; and a month after the time you will see in some corner of a *London Evening Post*, yesterday, died the Rev. Mr. John Grey, Senior Fellow of Clare Hall, a facetious companion, and well respected by all that knew him. His death is supposed to have been occasioned by a fit of the apoplexy, being found fallen out of bed." But this whimsical anticipation of death and a blundering mortuary inscription, was startled out of his thoughts by the sudden approach of death itself to one whom he dearly loved. His aunt, Miss Mary Antrobus, died somewhat suddenly, at the age of sixty-six, at Stoke, on the 5th of November, 1749. The letter which Gray wrote to his mother on receiving news of this event is so characteristic of his wise and tender seriousness of character, and allows us to observe so much more closely than usual the real working of his mind, that no apology is needed for quoting it here. It was written from Cambridge, on the 7th of November, 1749:—

The unhappy news I have just received from you equally surprises and afflicts me. I have lost a person I loved very much, and have been used to from my infancy; but am much more concerned for your loss, the circumstances of which I forbear to dwell upon, as you must be too sensible of them yourself;

and will, I fear, more and more need a consolation that no one can give, except He who had preserved her to you so many years, and at last, when it was His pleasure, has taken her from us to Himself; and perhaps, if we reflect upon what she felt in this life, we may look upon this as an instance of His goodness both to her and to those that loved her. She might have languished many years before our eyes in a continual increase of pain, and totally helpless; she might have long wished to end her misery without being able to attain it; or perhaps even lost all sense and yet continued to breathe; a sad spectacle for such as must have felt more for her than she could have done for herself. However you may deplore your own loss, yet think that she is at last easy and happy: and has now more occasion to pity us than we her. I hope, and beg, you will support yourself with that resignation we owe to Him, who gave us our being for good, and who deprives us of it for the same reason. I would have come to you directly, but you do not say whether you desire I should or not; if you do, I beg I may know it, for there is nothing to hinder me, and I am in very good health.

It is impossible to imagine anything more sweet-natured and unaffected than this letter, and it opens to us for a moment the closed and sacred book of Gray's home-life, those quiet autumn days of every year so peacefully spent in loving and being loved by these three placid old ladies at Stoke, in a warm atmosphere of musk and pot-pourri.

The death of his aunt seems to have brought to his recollection the *Elegy in a Country Churchyard*, begun seven years before within sight of the ivy-clustered spire under whose shadow she was laid. He seems to have taken it in hand again, at Cambridge, in the winter of 1749, and tradition, which would fain see the poet always writing in the very precincts of a churchyard, has fabled that he wrote some stanzas among the tombs of Gran-

chester. He finished it, however, as he began it, at Stoke Pogis, giving the last touches to it on the 12th of June, 1750. "Having put an end to a thing whose beginning you have seen long ago," he writes on that day to Horace Walpole, "I immediately send it to you. You will, I hope, look upon it in the light of a thing with an end to it: a merit that most of my writings have wanted, and are like to want." Walpole was only too highly delighted with this latest effusion of his friend, in which he was acute enough to discern the elements of a lasting success. It is curious to reflect upon the modest and careless mode in which that poem was first circulated which was destined to enjoy and to retain a higher reputation in literature than any other English poem, perhaps than any other poem of the world, written between Milton and Wordsworth. The fame of the *Elegy* has spread to all countries, and has exercised an influence on all the poetry of Europe, from Denmark to Italy, from France to Russia. With the exception of certain works of Byron and Shakespeare, no English poem has been so widely admired and imitated abroad; and after more than a century of existence, we find it as fresh as ever, when its copies, even the most popular of all, those of Lamartine, are faded and tarnished. It possesses the charm of incomparable felicity, of a melody that is not too subtle to charm every ear, of a moral persuasiveness that appeals to every generation, and of metrical skill that in each line proclaims the master. The *Elegy* may almost be looked upon as the typical piece of English verse, our poem of poems; not that it is the most brilliant or original or profound lyric in our language, but because it combines in more balanced perfection than any other all the qualities that go to the production of a fine poetical

effect. The successive criticisms of a swarm of Dryasdusts, each depositing his drop of siccative, the boundless vogue and consequent profanation of stanza upon stanza, the changes of fashion, the familiarity that breeds indifference, all these things have not succeeded in destroying the vitality of this humane and stately poem. The solitary writer of authority who since the death of Johnson has ventured to depreciate Gray's poetry, Mr. Swinburne, who, in his ardour to do justice to Collins, has been deeply and extravagantly unjust to the greater man, even he, coming to curse, has been obliged to bless this "poem of such high perfection and such universal appeal to the tenderest and noblest depths of human feeling," admitting, again, with that frankness which makes Mr. Swinburne the most generous of disputants, that "as an elegiac poet, Gray holds for all ages to come his unassailable and sovereign station."

We may well leave to its fate a poem with so splendid a history, a poem more thickly studded with phrases that have become a part and parcel of colloquial speech than any other piece, even of Shakespeare's, consisting of so few consecutive lines. A word or two however may not be out of place in regard to its form and the literary history of its composition. The heroic quatrain, in the use of which here and elsewhere, Gray easily excels all other English writers, was not new to our literature. Among the Pembroke MSS. I find copious notes by Gray on the *Nosce Teipsum* of Sir John Davies, a beautiful philosophical poem first printed in 1599, and composed in this measure. Davenant had chosen the same for his fragmentary epic of *Gondibert*, and Dryden for his metallic and gorgeous poem of the *Annus Mirabilis*. All these essays were certainly known to Gray, and he was possibly not uninfluenced

by the *Love Elegies* of James Hammond, a young cousin of Horace Walpole's, who had died in 1742, and had affected to be the Tibullus of the age. Hammond had more taste than genius, yet after reading, with much fatigue, his forgotten elegies, I cannot avoid the impression that Gray was influenced by this poetaster, in the matter of form, more than by any other of his contemporaries. A familiar quatrain of West:—

Ah me! what boots us all our boasted power,
Our golden treasure and our purple state!
They cannot ward the inevitable hour,
Nor stay the fearful violence of fate,

was probably the wild-wood stock on which Gray grafted his wonderful rose of roses, borrowing something from all his predecessors, but justifying every act of plagiarism by the brilliance of his new combination. Even the tiresome sing-song of Hammond became in Gray's hands an instrument of infinite variety and beauty, as if a craftsman by the mere touch of his fingers should turn ochre into gold. The measure, itself, from first to last, is an attempt to render in English the solemn alternation of passion and reserve, the interchange of imploring and desponding tones, that is found in the Latin elegiac, and Gray gave his poem, when he first published it, an outward resemblance to the text of Tibullus by printing it without any stanzaic pauses. It is in this form and with the original spelling that the poem appears in an exquisite little volume, privately printed a few years ago at the Cambridge University Press, in which Mr. Munro has placed his own Ovidian translation of the *Elegy* opposite the original text; as pretty a tribute as was ever paid by one great University scholar to the memory of another.

Walpole's enthusiasm for the *Elegy in a Country Churchyard* led him to commit the grave indiscretion of handing it about from friend to friend, and even of distributing manuscript copies of it, without Gray's cognizance. At the Manor House at Stoke Lady Cobham, who seems to have known Horace Walpole, read the *Elegy in a Country Churchyard* in manuscript before it had been many months in existence, and conceived a violent desire to know the author. So quiet was Gray, and so little inclined to assert his own personality, that she was unaware that he and she had lived together in the same country parish for several years, until a Rev. Mr. Robert Purt, a Cambridge fellow settled at Stoke, told her that, "thereabouts there lurked a wicked imp they call a poet." Mr. Purt, however, enjoyed a very slight acquaintance with Gray (he was offended shortly afterwards at the introduction of his name into the *Long Story*, and very properly died of small-pox immediately), and could not venture to introduce him to her ladyship. Lady Cobham, however, had a guest staying with her, a Lady Schaub, who knew a friend of Gray's, a Lady Brown. On this very meagre introduction, Lady Schaub and Miss Speed, the niece of Lady Cobham, were persuaded by her ladyship, who shot her arrow like Teucer from behind the shield of Ajax, to call boldly upon Gray. They did so in the summer of 1751, but when they had crossed the fields to West End House, they found that the poet had gone out for a walk. They begged the ladies to say nothing of their visit, but they left among the papers in Gray's study this piquant little note: "Lady Schaub's compliments to Mr. Gray; she is sorry not to have found him at home, to tell him that Lady Brown is very well." This little adventure assumed the hues of mystery and romance in so uneventful life as Gray's, and

curiosity combined with good manners to make him put his shyness in his pocket and return Lady Schaub's polite but eccentric call. That far-reaching spider, the Viscountess Cobham, had now fairly caught him in her web, and for the remaining nine years of her life, she and her niece Miss Speed were his fast friends. Indeed his whole life might have been altered if Lady Cobham had had her way, for it seems certain that she would have been highly pleased to have seen him the husband of Harriet Speed and inheritor of the fortunes of the family. At one time Gray seems to have been really frightened lest they should marry him suddenly, against his will; and perhaps he almost wished they would. At all events the only lines of his which can be called amatory were addressed to Miss Speed. She was seven years his junior, and when she was nearly forty she married a very young French officer, and went to live abroad, to which events, not uninteresting to Gray, we shall return in their proper place.

The romantic incidents of the call just described inspired Gray with his fantastic account of them given in the *Long Story*. He dwells on the ancient seat of the Huntingdons and Hattons, from the door of which one morning issued

A brace of warriors, not in buff,
But rustling in their silks and tissuea.

The first came cap-a-pee from France,
Her conquering destiny fulfilling,
Whom meaner beauties eye askance,
And vainly ape her art of killing.

The other amazon kind heaven
Had armed with spirit, wit and satire;
But Cobham had the polish given,
And tipped her arrows with good-nature.

With bonnet blue and capuchine,
And aprons long, they hid their armour ;
And veiled their weapons, bright and keen,
In pity to the country farmer.

These warriors sallied forth in the cause of a lady of high degree, who had just heard that the parish contained a poet, and who

Swore by her coronet and ermine,
She'd issue out her high commission
To rid the manor of such vermin.

At last they discover his lowly haunt, and bounce in without so much as a tap at the door.

The trembling family they daunt,
They flirt, they sing, they laugh, they tattle,
Rummage his mother, pinch his aunt,
And upstairs in a whirlwind rattle :

Each hole and cupboard they explore,
Each creek and cranny of his chamber,
Run hurry-scurry round the floor,
And o'er the bed and tester clamber :

Into the drawers and china pry,
Papers and books, a huge imbroglio,
Under a tea-cup he might lie,
Or creased, like dog's-ears, in a folio.

The pitying Muses, however, have conveyed him away, and the proud amazons are obliged to retreat ; but they have the malignity to leave a spell behind them, which their victim finds when he slinks back to his home.

The words too eager to unriddle
The poet felt a strange disorder ;
Transparent bird-lime formed the middle,
And chains invisible the border.

So cunning was the apparatus,
The powerful pot-hooks did so move him,
That will he, nill he, to the great house
He went as if the devil drove him.

When he arrives at the Manor House, of course, he is dragged before the great lady, and is only saved from destruction by her sudden fit of clemency:—

The ghostly prudes with haggard face
Already had condemned the sinner,
My lady rose, and with a grace—
She smiled, and bid him come to dinner.

All this is excellent fooling, charmingly arch and easy in its humorous romance, and highly interesting as a picture of Gray's home-life. In the Pembroke MS. of the *Long Story*, he says that he wrote it in August 1750. It was included in the semi-private issue of the *Six Poems* in 1753, but in no other collection published during Gray's life-time. He considered its allusions too personal to be given to the public.

In this one instance Walpole's indiscretion in circulating the *Elegy* brought Gray satisfaction; in others it annoyed him. On the 10th of February, 1751, he received a rather impertinently civil letter from the publisher of a periodical called the *Magazine of Magazines*, coolly informing him that he was actually printing his "ingenious poem called reflections in a Country Church-yard," and praying for his indulgence and the honour of his correspondence. Gray immediately wrote to Horace Walpole (Feb. 11th): "As I am not at all disposed to be either so indulgent or so correspondent as they desire, I have but one bad way left to escape the honour they would inflict upon me: and therefore am obliged to desire

you would make Dodsley print it immediately (which may be done in less than a week's time) from your copy, but without my name, in what form is most convenient for him, but on his best paper and character; he must correct the press himself, and print it without any interval between the stanzas, because the sense is in some places continued without them." All this was done with extraordinary promptitude, and five days after this letter of Gray's, on the 16th of February, 1751, Dodsley published a large quarto pamphlet, anonymous, price sixpence, entitled *An Elegy wrote in a Country Church-Yard*. It was preceded by a short advertisement, unsigned, but written by Horace Walpole. At this point may be inserted a note, which Gray has appended in the margin of the Pembroke MS. of this poem. It settles a point of bibliography which has been discussed by commentator after commentator:—

Published in Feb^r, 1751, by Dodsley, & went thro' four editions, in two months; and afterwards a fifth, 6th, 7th, & 8th, 9th, 10th, & 11th, printed also in 1753 with Mr. Bentley's Designs, of w^{ch} there is a 2^d edition, & again by Dodsley in his Miscellany vol. 4th & in a Scotch Collection call'd the *Union*; translated into Latin by Chr: Anstey, Esq. and the Rev^d Mr. Roberts, & published in 1762, & again in the same year by Rob: Lloyd, M.A.

Gray here cites fifteen authorized editions of the English text of the *Elegy*; its pirated editions were countless. The *Magazine of Magazines* persisted, although Gray had been neither indulgent nor correspondent, and the poem appeared in the issue for February, published, as was then the habit of periodicals, on the last of that month. The *London Magazine* stole it for its issue for March, and the *Grand Magazine of Magazines* copied it in April. Every-

body read it, in town and country ; Shenstone, far away from the world of books, had seen it before the 28th of March. It achieved a complete popular success from the very first, and the name of its author gradually crept into notoriety. The attribution of the *Elegy* to Gray was more general than has been supposed. A pamphlet, printed soon after this date, speaks of "the Maker of the Churchyard Essay" as being a Cambridge celebrity whose claims to preferment had been notoriously overlooked ; and by far the cleverest of all the parodies, *An Evening Contemplation*, 1753, a poem of special interest to students of university manners, is preceded by an elaborate compliment to Gray. The success of his poem, however, brought him little direct satisfaction, and no money. He gave the right of publication to Dodsley, as he did in all other instances. He had a Quixotic notion that it was beneath a gentleman to take money for his inventions from a bookseller, a view in which Dodsley warmly coincided ; and it was stated by another bookseller, who after Gray's death contended with Mason, that Dodsley was known to have made nearly a thousand pounds by the poetry of Gray. Mason had no such scruples as his friend, and made frantic efforts to regain Gray's copyright, launching vainly into litigation on the subject, and into unseemly controversy.

The autumn of 1750 had been marked in Gray's uneventful annals by the death of Dr. Middleton, and by the visit of a troublesome Indian cousin, Mrs. Forster, who stayed a month in London, and wearied Gray by her insatiable craving after sight-seeing. In Conyers Middleton, who died on the 28th of July, 1750, at the age of sixty-seven, Gray lost one of his most familiar and most intellectual associates, a person of extraordinary talents, to

whom, without ever becoming attached, he had become accustomed. His remark on the event is full of his fine reserve and sobriety of feeling : " You have doubtless heard of the loss I have had in Dr. Middleton, whose house was the only easy place one could find to converse in at Cambridge. For my part I find a friend so uncommon a thing, that I cannot help regretting even an old acquaintance, which is an indifferent likeness of it, and though I don't approve the spirit of his books, methinks 'tis pity the world should lose so rare a thing as a good writer."

In the same letter he tells Wharton that he himself is neither cheerful nor easy in bodily health, and yet has the mortification to find his spiritual part the most infirm thing about him. He is applying himself heartily to the study of zoology, and has procured for that purpose the works of M. de Buffon. In reply to Wharton's urgent entreaties for a visit, he agrees that he " could indeed wish to refresh my *ἐνεργεία* a little at Durham by a sight of you, but when is there a probability of my being so happy ?" However, it seems that he would have contrived this expedition, had it not been for the aforesaid cousin, Mrs. Forster, " a person as strange, and as much to seek, as though she had been born in the mud of the Ganges." At the same time he warns Wharton against returning to Cambridge, saying that Mrs. Wharton will find life very dreary in a place where women are so few, and those " squeecy and formal, little skilled in amusing themselves or other people. All I can say is, she must try to make up for it among the men, who are not over agreeable neither."

In spite of this warning, the Whartons appear to have come back to Cambridge. At all events we find Dr. Wharton wavering between that town and Bath as the

best place for him to practise in as a physician, and thereupon there follows a gap of two years in Gray's correspondence with him. The affectionate familiarity of the poet with both Dr. and Mrs. Wharton when they re-emerge in his correspondence, the pet names he has for the children, and the avuncular air of intimacy implied, make it almost certain that in 1751 and 1752 he had the pleasure of seeing these dear friends settled at his side, and enjoyed in their family circle the warmth and brightness of a home. At all events, after the publication of the *Elegy*, Gray is once more lost to us for two years, most unaccountably, since, if the Whartons were close beside him, and Mason across the street at Pembroke, Walpole all this time was exercising his vivacious and importunate pen at Strawberry Hill, and trying to associate Gray in all his schemes and fancies.

One of Walpole's sudden whims was a friendship for that eccentric and dissipated person, Richard Bentley, only son of the famous Master of Trinity, whose acquaintance Walpole made in 1750. This man was an amateur artist of more than usual talent, an elegant scholar in his way, and with certain frivolous gifts of manner that were alternately pleasing and displeasing to Walpole. The artistic merit of Bentley was exaggerated in his own time and has been underrated since, nor does there now exist any important relic of it except his designs for Gray's poems. In the summer of 1752 Horace Walpole seems to have suggested to Dodsley the propriety of publishing an *édition de luxe* of Gray, with Bentley's illustrations. But as early as June 1751 these illustrations were being made. As Gray gave the poems for nothing, and as Walpole paid Bentley to draw and Muller to engrave the illustrations, it is not surprising that Dodsley was eager to close with

the offer. Bentley threw himself warmly into the project ; it is quite certain that he consulted Gray step by step, for the designs show an extraordinary attention to the details and even to the hints of the text. Most probably the three gentlemen amused themselves during the long vacation of 1752 by concocting the whole thing together. Gray who, it must be remembered, was a connoisseur in painting, was so much impressed by Bentley's talent and versatility, that he addressed to him a copy of beautiful verses, which unfortunately existed only in a single manuscript, and had been torn before Mason found them. In these he says :—

The tardy rhymes that used to linger on,
To censure cold, and negligent of fame,
In swifter measures animated run,
And catch a lustre from his genuine flame.

Ah ! could they catch his strength, his easy grace,
His quick creation, his unerring line,
The energy of Pope they might efface,
And Dryden's harmony submit to mine.

But not to one in this benighted age
Is that diviner inspiration given,
That burns in Shakespeare's or in Milton's page,
The pomp and prodigality of heaven.

As when conspiring in the diamond's blaze,
The meaner gems that singly charm the sight,
Together dart their intermingled rays,
And dazzle with a luxury of light.

This is the Landorian manner of praising, and almost the only instance of a high note of enthusiasm in the entire writings of Gray. Bentley was not ludicrously unworthy of such eulogy ; his designs are extremely remarkable in their way. In an age entirely given up to

composed and conventional forms, he seems to have drawn from nature and to have studied the figure from life.

Early in March, 1753, the *Poemata-Grayo-Bentleiana*, as Walpole called them, appeared, a small thin folio, on very thick paper, printed only on one side, and entitled, *Designs by Mr. R. Bentley for Six Poems by Mr. T. Gray*. This is the *editio princeps* of Gray's collected poems, and consists of the *Ode to Spring* (here simply called *Ode*), and of the *Ode on the death of a Favourite Cat*, of both of which it was the second edition; a third edition of the *Eton Ode*; a first appearance of *A Long Story* and *Hymn to Adversity*; and a twelfth edition of the *Elegy written in a Country Churchyard*. Bentley's illustrations consist of a frontispiece, and a full-page design for each poem, with headpieces, tailpieces, and initial letters. The frontispiece is a border of extremely ingenious rococo ornament surrounding a forest-glade, in which Gray, a graceful little figure, sits in a pensive attitude. This has a high value for us, since to any one accustomed to the practice of art, it is obvious that this is a sketch from life, not a composed study, and we have here in all probability a portrait of the poet in his easiest attitude. The figure is that of a young man, of small stature, but elegantly made, with a melancholy and downcast countenance.

The portraiture becomes still more certain when we turn to the indiscreet, but extremely interesting design for *A Long Story*, where we not only have a likeness of Gray in 1753 which singularly resembles the more elaborate portrait of him painted by Eckhardt in 1747, but we have also Lady Schaub, Mr. Purt, and, what is most interesting of all, the pretty delicate features of Miss Speed. The Rev. Mr. Purt is represented as blowing the trumpet of Fame, while the amazon ladies fly through the air, seeking for their

victim the poet, who is being concealed by the Muses elsewhere than in a gorge of Parnassus. The designs are engraved on copper by two well-known men of that day. The best are by John Sebastian Müller, some of whose initial letters are simply exquisite in execution; the rest are the work of a man of greater reputation in that day, Charles Grignion, whose work in this instance lacks the refinement of Müller's, which is indeed of a very high order. Grignion was the last survivor among persons associated with the early and middle life of Gray; he lived to be nearly a hundred years old, and died as late as 1810. It might be supposed that the merits of the designs to the *Six Poems* lay in the interpretation given by engravers of so much talent to poor drawings, but we happen to possess Gray's implicit statement that this was not the case. If, therefore, we are to consider Bentley responsible, for instance, for such realistic forms as the nude figures in the head-piece to the *Hymn to Adversity*, or for such feeling for foliage as is shown in the head and tail pieces to the first ode, we must claim for him a higher place in English art than has hitherto been conceded to him. At all events the *Six Poems* of 1753 is one of the few really beautiful books produced from an English press during the middle of the eighteenth century, and in spite of its rococo style, it is still a desirable possession.

It is pleasant to think of Gray reclining in the blue parlour over the supper-room at Strawberry Hill, turning over prints with Horace Walpole, and glancing down the garden to the Thames that flashed in silver behind the syringas and honeysuckles; or seated, with a little touch of sententious gravity, in the Library, chiding Chute and their host for their frivolous taste in heraldry, or incited by the dark panels and the old brass grate to chat of

architecture and decoration, and the new-found mysteries of Gothic. It is perhaps pleasanter still to think of him dreaming in the garden of Stoke Pogis, or chatting over a dish of tea with his old aunts, as he called his mother and his aunt collectively, or strolling, with a book in his hand, along the southward ridge of meadows to pay Lady Cobham a stately call, or flirt a little with Miss Harriet Speed.

But this quietude was not to last much longer. Walpole, indeed, was surprised to have a visit from him in January, 1753, just when Bentley's prints were going to press, for Gray had been suddenly called up from Cambridge to Stoke by the news of his mother's illness. He had not expected to find her alive, but when he arrived she was much better, and remained so for more than a month. He did not choose, however, to leave her, and was at Stoke when the proof of Bentley's *cul-de-lampe* for the *Elegy* arrived; this represents a village funeral, and being examined by the old ladies, was conceived by them to be a burying ticket. They asked him whether anybody had left him a ring; and hereupon follows a remark which shows that Gray had never mentioned to his mother or either of his aunts that he wrote verses; nor would now do so, lest they should "burn me for a poet." A week or two later, Walpole and Gray very nearly had another quarrel. Walpole, in his officiousness, had had Eckhardt's portrait of Gray, which hung in the library at Strawberry Hall, engraved for the *Six Poems*, a step which, taken as it was without the poet's cognizance, drew down on Walpole an excessively sharp letter—"Gray does not hate to find fault with me"—and a final veto on any such parade of personality.

Mrs. Gray soon ceased to rally, and after a painful

struggle for life, expired on the 11th of March, 1753, at the age of sixty-seven. Her son saw her buried, in the family tomb, on the south side of the church-yard, near the church, where may still be read the exquisitely simple and affecting epitaph which he inscribed on her tombstone:—

In the same pious confidence, beside her friend and sister, here sleep the remains of Dorothy Gray, widow, the careful tender mother of many children, one of whom alone had the misfortune to survive her.

When, a few months later, Mason had been standing by the death-bed of his father, and spoke to his friend of the awe that he experienced, Gray's thoughts went back to his mother, and he wrote:—"I have seen the scene you describe, and know how dreadful it is: I know too I am the better for it. We are all idle and thoughtless things, and have no sense, no use in the world any longer than that sad impression lasts; the deeper it is engraved the better." These are the words which came into Byron's memory when he received the news of his mother's death.

The Whartons had by this time returned to Durham, and thither at last, in the autumn of 1753, Gray resolved to visit them. He had been unable to remain at Stoke now that it was haunted by the faces of the dead that he had loved, and he went into those lodgings over the hosier's shop in the eastern part of Jermyn Street, which were his favourite haunt in London. He left town for Cambridge in May, and in June wrote to Wharton to say that he was at last going to set out with Stonehewer in a post-chaise for the north. In the middle of July they started, proceeding leisurely by Belvoir, Burleigh, and York, taking a week to reach Studley. The journey was very agreeable, and every place on the route which offered anything

curious in architecture, the subject at this moment most in Gray's thoughts, was visited and described in the note-book. Gray remained for two whole months and more in Dr. Wharton's house at Durham, associating with the bishop, Dr. Trevor, and having "one of the most beautiful vales in England to walk in, with prospects that change every ten steps, and open something new wherever I turn me, all rude and romantic." It had been proposed that on the return journey he should visit Mason at Hull, but the illness of that gentleman's father prevented this scheme, and the friends met at York instead. Gray travelled southwards for two days with "a Lady Swinburne, a Roman Catholic, not young, that has been much abroad, seen a great deal, knew a great many people, very chatty and communicative, so that I passed my time very well." I regret that the now living and illustrious descendant of this amusing lady is unable to tell me anything definite of her history.

Gray came back to Cambridge to find the lime-trees changing colour, stayed there one day, and was just preparing to proceed to his London lodgings, when an express summoned him to Stoke, where his aunt Mrs. Rogers had suffered a stroke of the palsy. He arrived on the 6th of October, to find everything "resounding with the wood lark and robin, and the voice of the sparrow heard in the land." His aunt, who was in her seventy-eighth year, had rallied to a surprising degree, and her recovery was not merely temporary. It would seem from an expression in one of his letters, that his paternal aunt, Mrs. Oliffe, had now gone down from Norwich to Stoke, to live with Mrs. Rogers. I do not remember that the history of literature presents us with the memoirs of any other poet favoured by nature with so many aunts as Gray possessed. Stoke was not a home for Gray with Mrs. Rogers bed-

ridden and with Mrs. Oliffe for its other inmate. The hospitable Whartons seem again to have taken pity on him, and he went from Jermyn Street up to Durham to spend with them Christmas of this same year, 1753.

Walpole remarked that Gray was "in flower" during these years 1750—1755. It was the blossoming of a shrub which throws out only one bud each season, and that bud sometimes nipped by an untimely frost. The rose on Gray's thorn for 1754 was an example of these blighted flowers, that never fully expanded. The *Ode on Vicissitude*, which was found after the poet's death, in a pocket-book of that year, should have been one of his finest productions, but it is unrevised and hopelessly truncated. Poor Mason rushed in where a truer poet might have feared to tread, and clipped the straggling lines, and finished it; six complete stanzas, however, are the genuine work of Gray. The verse-form has a catch in the third line, which is perhaps the most delicate metrical effect Gray ever attained; while some of the nature-painting in the poem is really exquisite.

New-born flocks, in rustic dance,
Frisking ply their feeble feet;
Forgetful of their wintry trance,
The birds his presence greet:
But chief the sky-lark warbles high
His trembling thrilling ecstasy,
And, lessening from the dazzled sight,
Melts into air and liquid light.

Here is a stanza which might almost be Wordsworth's:—

See the wretch, that long has tost
On the thorny bed of pain,
At length repair his vigour lost,
And breathe and walk again:

The meanest floweret of the vale,
 The simplest note that swells the gale,
 The common sun, the air, the skies,
 To him are opening paradise.

That graceful trifler with metre, the sprightly Gresset, had written an *Épître à ma Sœur* to which Gray frankly avowed that he owed the idea of his poem on Vicissitude. But it was only a few commonplaces which the English poet borrowed from the French one, who might, indeed, remind him that—

Mille spectacles, qu'autrefois
 On voyait avec nonchalance,
 Transportent aujourd'hui, présentant des appas
 Inconnus à l'indifférence,

but was quite incapable of Gray's music and contemplative felicities. This *Ode on Vicissitude* seems, in some not very obvious way, to be connected with the death of Pope. It is possible that these were the "few autumn verses" which Gray began to write on that occasion. His manner of composition, his slow, half-hearted, desultory touch, his whimsical fits of passing inspiration, are unique in their kind; there never was a professional poet whose mode was so thoroughly that of the amateur.

A short prose treatise, first printed in 1814, and named by the absurd Mathias *Architectura Gothica*, although the subject of it is purely Norman architecture, seems to belong to this year 1754. Gray was the first man in England to understand architecture scientifically, and his taste was simply too pure to be comprehended in an age that took William Kent for its architectural prophet. Even among those persons of refined feeling who desired to cultivate a taste for old English buildings, there was a sad absence of exact knowledge. Akenside thought that

the ruins of Persepolis formed a beautiful example of the Gothic style ; and we know that Horace Walpole dazzled his contemporaries with the gimcrack pinnacles of Strawberry Hill. We may see from Bentley's frontispiece to the *Elegy*, where a stucco moulding is half torn away, and reveals a pointed arch of brick-work, that even among the elect the true principles of Gothic architecture were scarcely understood. What Georgian amateurs really admired was a grotto with cockle-shells and looking-glass, such as the Greatheads made at Guy's Cliff, or such follies in foliage as Shenstone perpetrated at Leasowes. Gray strove hard to clear his memory of all such trifling, and to arm his reason against arguments such as those of Pococke, who held that the Gothic arch was a degradation of the Moorish cupola, or of Batty Langley, who invented five orders in a new style of his own. Gray's treatise on Norman architecture is so sound and learned that it is much to be regretted that he has not left us more of his architectural essays. He formed his opinions from personal observation and measurement. Among the Pembroke MSS. there are copious notes of a tour in the Fens, during which he jotted down the characteristics of all the principal minsters, as far as Crowland and Boston. It is not too much to say that Gray was the first modern student of the history of architecture. Norton Nicholls has recorded that when certain would-be people of taste were wrangling about the style in which some ancient building was constructed, Gray cut the discussion short by saying, in the spirit of Mr. Ruskin, "Call it what you please, but allow that it is beautiful." He did not approve of Walpole's Gothic constructions at Strawberry Hill, and frankly told him, when he was shown the gilding and the glass, that he had "degenerated into finery."

CHAPTER VI.

THE PINDARIC ODES.

It is not known at what time Gray resolved on composing poems which should resemble in stanzaic structure the triumphal odes or *epnikia* of Pindar, but it is certain that towards the close of 1754 he completed one such elaborate lyric. On the 26th of December of that year he gave the finishing touches to an "ode in the Greek manner," and sent it from Cambridge to Dr. Wharton, with the remark, "If this be as tedious to you as it is grown to me, I shall be sorry that I sent it you. . . . I desire you would by no means suffer this to be copied, nor even show it, unless to very few, and especially not to mere scholars, that can scan all the measures in Pindar, and say the scholia by heart." Months later, Mason was pleading for a copy, but in vain. The poem thrown off so indifferently was that now known to us as *The Progress of Poesy*, and it marked a third and final stage in Gray's poetical development. In the early odes he had written for his contemporaries, in the *Elegy in a Country Churchyard* he had written for all the world; in the Pindaric Odes he was now to write for poets. In the *Elegy* he had dared to leave those trodden paths of phraseology along which the critics of the hour, the quibbling Hurds and Warburtons, could follow him step by step, but his

startling felicities had carried his readers captive by their appeal to a common humanity. He was now about to launch upon a manner of writing in which he could no longer be accompanied by the plaudits of the vulgar, and where his style could no longer appeal with security to the sympathy of the critics. He was now, in other words, about to put out his most original qualities in poetry.

That he could not hope for popularity, he was aware at the outset; "be assured," he consoled his friends, "that my taste for praise is not like that of children for fruit; if there were nothing but medlars and blackberries in the world, I could be very well content to go without any at all;" he could wait patiently for the suffrage of his peers. The very construction of the poem was a puzzle to his friends, although it is one of the most intelligibly and rationally built of all the odes in the language. It is in point of fact, a poem of three stanzas, in an elaborately consistent verse-form, with forty-one lines in each stanza. The length of these periods is relieved by the regular division of each stanza into strophe, antistrophe, and epode, the same plan having been used by no previous English poet but Congreve, who had written in 1705 a learned and graceful *Discourse on the Pindarique Ode*, which Gray was possibly acquainted with. Congreve's practice, however, had been as unsatisfactory as his theory was excellent, and Gray was properly the first poet to comprehend and follow the mode of Pindar.

Mr. Matthew Arnold has pointed out that the evolution of *The Progress of Poesy* is no less noble and sound than its style. It is worthy of remark that the power of evolution has not been common among lyrical poets even of a high rank. Even in Milton it is strangely absent, and we feel that all his odes, beautiful as they are, do not bud and

branch and fall in fruit, closing with the exhaustion of their functions, but merely cease, because all poems must stop somewhere. The *Nativity Ode* does not close because the poet has nothing more to say, but merely because " 'tis time our tedious song should here have ending." In Collins, surely, we find the same failing; the poem is a burst of emotion, but not an organism. The much lauded *Ode to Liberty*, with its opening peal of trumpet music, ends with a foolish abruptness, as if the poet had got tired of his instrument, and had thrown it away. Shelley, again, in his longer odes, seems to lose himself in beautiful meandering oratory, and to stop, as he began, in response to a mere change of purpose. Keats, on the other hand, is always consistent in his evolution, and so is Wordsworth at his more elevated moments; the same may even be remarked of a poet infinitely below these in intellectual value, Edgar Poe. Gray, however, is the main example in our literature of a poet possessing this Greek quality of structure in his lyrical work, and it is to be noted that throughout his career it never left him, even on occasions when he was deserted by every other form of inspiration. His poems, whatever they are, are never chains of consecutive stanzas; each line, each group of lines, has its proper place in a structure that could not be shorter or longer without a radical re-arrangement of ideas.

The strophe of the opening stanza of *The Progress of Poesy* invokes that lyre of Æolian strings, the breathings of those Æolian flutes, which Pindar had made the symbol of the art of poetry, and the sources, progress, and various motion of that art, "enriching every subject with a pomp of diction and luxuriant harmony of numbers," are described under the image of a thousand descending streams.

The antistrophe returns to the consideration of the power of poetry, not now in motion, but an alluring and a soothing force around which the Passions throng and are subdued, a thought being here borrowed apparently from Collins; the epode continues and combines these two strains of thought, and shows that poetry, whether in motion or at rest, is working the good will of Love, who deigns herself to move in a rhythmic harmony, and be the slave of verse. In the second stanza, the strophe recalls the miserable state of man, relieved by the amenities of the heavenly Muse, who arms Hyperion against the sickly company of Night; the antistrophe shows us how the need of song arose in savage man, and illuminated "their feather-cinctured chiefs, and dusky loves;" while the epode breaks into an ecstatic celebration of the advent of poetic art to Greece:—

Woods, that wave o'er Delphi's steep,
 Isles, that crown th' Ægean deep,
 Fields, that cool Ilissus laves,
 Or where Mæander's amber waves
 In lingering labyrinths creep,
 How do your tuneful echoes languish,
 Mute, but to the voice of anguish!
 Where each old poetic mountain
 Inspiration breathed around;
 Every shade and hallowed fountain
 Murmured deep a solemn sound.

But the Muses, "in Greece's evil hour," went to Rome, and "when Latium had her lofty spirit lost," it was to Albion that they turned their steps. The third strophe describes how the awful Mother unveiled her face to Shakespeare; the antistrophe celebrates the advent of Milton and Dryden, while the final epode winds the whole poem to a close with a regret that the lyre once held by

the last-named poet has degenerated into hands like Gray's:—

Hark! his hands the lyre explore!
 Bright-eyed Fancy, hovering o'er,
 Scatters from her pictured urn
 Thoughts that breathe, and words that burn.
 But ah! 'tis heard no more—
 Oh! lyre divine, what daring spirit
 Wakes thee now? Though he inherit
 Not the pride, nor ample pinion,
 That the Theban eagle bear,
 Sailing with supreme dominion
 Thro' the azure deep of air:
 Yet oft before his infant eyes would run
 Such forms as glitter in the Muse's ray,
 With orient hues, unhorrowed of the sun—
 Yet shall he mount, and keep his distant way
 Beyond the limits of a vulgar fate,
 Beneath the Good how far,—but far above the Great.

In these passages, especially where he employs the double rhyme, we seem to catch in Gray the true modern accent, the precursor of the tones of Shelley and Byron, both of whom, but especially the former, were greatly influenced by this free and ringing music. The reader has only to compare the epode last quoted with the choruses in *Hellas* to see what Shelley owed to the science and invention of Gray. This manner of rhyming, this rapid and recurrent beat of song, was the germ out of which have sprung all later metrical inventions, and without which Mr. Swinburne himself might now be polishing the heroic couplet to its last perfection of brightness and sharpness.

Another Pindaric ode on *The Liberty of Genius* was planned about the same time, but of this there exists only the following fragment of an argument:—"All that man

of power can do for men of genius is to leave them at their liberty, compared to birds that, when confined to a cage, do but regret the loss of their freedom in melancholy strains, and lose the luscious wildness and happy luxuriance of their notes, which used to make the woods resound." The subject is one well-fitted to its author's power, and we regret its loss as we regret that of Collins' *Ode on the Music of the Grecian Theatre*. Unlike that blue rose of the bibliophiles, however, Gray's ode probably was never written at all.

In the meantime not much was happening to Gray himself. His friend Mason had taken holy orders, and in November 1754 had become rector of Aston and chaplain to the Earl of Holderness; "we all are mighty glad," says Gray, "that he is in orders, and no better than any of us." Early in 1755 both Mason and Walpole set upon Gray to publish a new volume of poems, whereupon he held up the single ode *On the Progress of Poesy*, and asked if they wished him to publish a "little sixpenny flam" like that, all by itself. He threatened if Wharton be tiresome, since the publishing faction had gained him over to their side, to write an ode against physicians, with some very stringent lines about magnesia and alicant soap. Pembroke meanwhile had just received an undergraduate of quality, Lord Strathmore, Thane of Glamis, "a tall, genteel figure" that pleased Gray, and presently was admitted within the narrow circle of his friends.

According to Mason, the exordium of the *Bard* was completed in March 1755, having occupied Gray for about three months. In the case of this very elaborate poem, Gray seems to have laid aside his customary reticence, and to have freely consulted his friends. Mason had seen the beginning of it before he went to Germany in May of that year, when

he found in Hamburg a literary lady who had read the "*Nitt Toats*" of Young, and thought the *Elegy in a Country Church-Yard* "bien jolie et mélancholique." Mason at Hanover meets Lord Nuneham, and is sure that Gray would delight in him, because he is so peevish and sensible and so good a hater, which gives us a passing glance at Gray himself. *The Bard* was exactly two years and five months in reaching completion, and the slowness of its growth was the subject of mirth with Gray himself, who called it "Odikle," and made fun of its stunted proportions.

On the 15th of July, 1755, Gray went down to the Vine, in Hampshire, to visit his old friend Chute, who was now beginning to recover a little from the shock of the death of his beloved heir and nephew. In the congenial company of the Italianate country gentleman Gray stayed a few days, and then went on to Southampton, Winchester, Portsmouth, and Netley Abbey, returning to Stoke on the 31st of July. Unfortunately he either took a chill on this little tour, or overtaxed his powers, and from this time to the end of his life, a period of sixteen years, he was seldom in a condition of even tolerable health. In August he was obliged to put himself under medical treatment; one alarming attack of gout after the other continued to undermine his constitution, and his system was further depressed by an exhausting regimen of magnesia and salts of wormwood. He had to lie up at Stoke for many weeks, with aching feet and temples, and was bled until he was too giddy and feeble to walk with comfort. All this autumn and winter of 1755 his symptoms were very serious. He could not sleep; he was troubled by a nervous deafness, and a pain in the region of the heart which seldom left him. Meanwhile he did not leave *The Bard*

untouched, but progressed slowly with it, as though he were a sculptor, deliberately pointing and chiselling a statue. He adopted the plan of copying strophes and fragments of it in his letters, and many such scraps exist in MS. Late in the autumn, however, he thought that he was falling into a decline, and in a fit of melancholy he laid *The Bard* aside.

Gray was altogether in a very nervous, distracted condition at this time, and first began to show symptoms of that fear of fire, which afterwards became almost a mania with him, by desiring Wharton to insure the two houses, at Wanstead and in Cornhill, which formed a principal part of his income; from the amount of the policies of these houses, we can infer that the first was a property of considerable value. The death of his mother, following on that of Miss Antrobus, had, it may here be remarked, removed all pressure of poverty from Gray for the remainder of his life. He was never rich, but from this time forward he was very comfortably provided for. Horace Walpole appears to have been alarmed at his friend's condition of health, and planned a change of scene for him, which it seems unfortunate that he could not persuade himself to undertake. George Hervey, Earl of Bristol, was named English Minister at Lisbon, and he offered to take Gray with him as his secretary, but the proud little poet refused. Perhaps the climate of Portugal might have proved too relaxing for him, and he might have laid his bones beside that grave where the grass was hardly green yet over the body of Fielding.

Gray's terror of fire has already been alluded to, and it had now become so marked as to be a subject of conversation in the college. He professed rather openly to believe that some drunken fellow or other would burn the

college down about their heads. On the 9th of January, 1756, he asked Dr. Wharton to buy him a rope-ladder of a man in Wapping who advertised such articles. It was to be rather more than thirty-six feet long, with strong hooks at the top. This machine Wharton promptly forwarded, and Gray proceeded to have an iron bar fixed within his bedroom-window. This bar, crossing a window which looks towards Pembroke, still exists and marks Gray's chambers at Peterhouse. Such preparations, however, could not be made without attracting great attention in the latter college, where Gray was by no means a favourite among the high-coloured young gentlemen who went bull-baiting to Heddington or came home drunk and roaring from a cock-shying at Market Hill. Accordingly the noisy fellow-commoners determined to have a lark at the timid little poet's expense, and one night in February 1756, when Gray was asleep in bed, they suddenly alarmed him with a cry of fire on his staircase, having previously placed a tub of water under his window. The ruse succeeded only too well: Gray, without staying to put on his clothes, hooked his rope-ladder to the iron bar, and descended nimbly into the tub of water, from which he was rescued with shouts of laughter by the unmannerly youths. But the jest might easily have proved fatal, as it was, he shivered in the February air so excessively that he had to be wrapped in the coat of a passing watchman, and to be carried into the college by the friendly Stonehewer, who now appeared on the scene. To our modern ideas this outrage on a harmless middle-aged man of honourable position, who had done nothing whatever to provoke insult or injury, is almost inconceivable. But there was a deep capacity for brutal folly underneath the varnish of the eighteenth century, and no one seems to have sympathized

with Gray or to have thought the conduct of the youths ungentlemanly. As, when Dryden was beaten by Rochester's hired and masked bravos, it was felt that Dryden was thereby disgraced, so Gray's friends were consistently silent on this story, as though it were a shame to him, and we owe our knowledge of the particulars to strangers, more especially to a wild creature called Archibald Campbell, who actually ventured to tell the tale during Gray's life-time.

Gray was very angry, and called upon the authorities of his college to punish the offenders. Mason says: "After having borne the insults of two or three young men of fortune longer than might reasonably have been expected from a man of less warmth of temper, Mr. Gray complained to the governing part of the Society, and not thinking that his remonstrance was sufficiently attended to, quitted the College." He went over to his old friends at Pembroke,¹ who welcomed him with one accord as if he had been "Mary of Valens in person." Under the foundation of this sainted lady he remained for the rest of his life, comfortably lodged, surrounded by congenial friends, and "as quiet as in the Grande Chartreuse." He does not seem to have ever been appointed to a fellowship at Pembroke. The chambers he is supposed to have occupied are still shown, a large low room at the western end of the Hitcham Building, bright and pleasant, with windows looking east and west. He adopted habits at Pembroke which he had never indulged in at Peterhouse. He was the first, and for a long while the only person in the University who made his rooms look pretty. He took

¹ In the Admission-Book at Pembroke there is this entry: "Thomas Gray, LL.B., admissus est ex Collegio Divi Petro. March (sic) 6, 1756."

care that his windows should be always full of mignonette or some other sweetly-scented plant, and he was famous for a pair of huge Japanese vases, in blue and white china. His servant, Stephen Hempstead, had to keep the room as bright and spick as an old lady's bandbox, and not an atom of dust was allowed to rest on the little harpsichord where the poet used to sit in the twilight and play toccatas of Scarlatti or Pergolesi. Here for fifteen quiet years, the autumn of his life, Gray lived among his books, his china, and his pictures, and here at last we shall see him die, with the good Master of Pembroke, *le Petit Bon Homme*, holding his hand in the last services of friendship. Well might Gray write to Wharton (March 25th, 1756):—"Removing myself from Peterhouse to Pembroke may be looked upon as a sort of æra in a life so barren of events as mine."

Curiously enough, the shock and agitation of the scene that has been just described appear to have had no ill effect upon Gray's health. His letters at this time became, on the contrary, much more buoyant in tone. In April 1756 an extraordinary concert of spiritual music, in which the *Stabat Mater* of Pergolesi was for the first time given in England, drew him up to London for three days, during which time he lodged with Wharton. All the ensuing summer Mason, now and henceforth known as "Scroddles" in Gray's correspondence, was perpetrating reams of poetry, or prose astonished out of its better nature at the sudden invasion of its provinces by rhyme. A terrible tragedy of *Caractacus*, suggested by the yet-unfinished *Barid*, with much blank-verse invocation of "Arviragus, my bold, my breathless boy," belongs to this year 1756, and can now be read only by a very patient student bent on finding how nimble Mason could be in borrowing the

mere shell and outward echo of Gray's poetical performances. The famous

While through the west, where sinks the crimson day,
Meek twilight slowly sails, and waves her banners gray.

which Gray pronounced "superlative," and which the modern reader must admit to be pretty, belong also to this year, and are to be found in an ode of Mason's, *To a Friend*, in which occurs the first contemporary celebration of a greater name in literature than his:—

Through this still valley let me stray,
Rapt in some strain of pensive GRAY,
Whose lofty genius bears along
The conscious dignity of Song;
And, scorning from the sacred store
To waste a note on Pride or Power,
Roves through the glimmering twilight gloom
And warbles round each rustic tomb:
He, too, perchance, (for well I know,
His heart can melt with friendly woe)
He, too, perchance, when these poor limbs are laid,
Will heave one tuneful sigh, and sooth my hovering shade.

Gray must have smiled at this foolish tribute, but he valued the affection that prompted it, and he deigned in a fatherly way to beg Wharton to let him hear if these odes were favourably spoken of in London.

The scene of Mason's *Caractacus* was laid in Mona, and Gray was at this time engaged in the spiritual ascension of Snowdon, with "Odikle" at his side. "I hope we shall be very good neighbours. Any Druidical anecdotes that I can meet with I will be sure to send you. I am of opinion that the ghosts"—for, alas! there are ghosts in *Caractacus*—"will spoil the picture, unless they are thrown at a huge distance, and extremely kept down." In June 1756

having "no more pores and muscular inflations, and troubled only with depression of mind," Gray at Stoke rather vaguely proposed to Mason at Tunbridge that they should spend the summer together on the Continent. "Shall we go in time, and have a house together in Switzerland? It is a fine poetical country to look at, and nobody there will understand a word we say or write." Mason was probably too much a child of his age to relish going to Switzerland; moreover, there was a chaplaincy to Lord John Cavendish towards which Mason was extending a greedy finger and thumb, and he preferred to remain in the happy hunting-grounds of endowment. Gray laughed with indulgent contempt at his young friend's grasping wishes, though when this intense desire for place passed all decent limits, he could reprove it sharply enough. To the sober and self-respecting Gray, who had never asked for anything in his life, to intrigue for church preferment was the conduct of a child or a knave, and he accordingly persisted in treating Mason as a child.

Very little progress was made with *The Bard* in 1756. In December of that year "Odikle is not a bit grown, though it is fine mild open weather." Suddenly in May 1757 it was brought to a conclusion in consequence of some concerts given at Cambridge by John Parry, the famous blind harper, who lived until 1782, and whose son was one of the first A.R.A.'s. Gray's account of the extraordinary effect that this man's music made on him is expressed in that light vein with which he loved to conceal deep emotion. "There is no faith in man, no, not in a Welshman; and yet Mr Parry has been here, and scratched out such ravishing blind harmony, such tunes of a thousand years old, with names enough to choke you, as have set all this learned body a dancing, and inspired them with due

reverence for my old Bard his countryman, wherever he shall appear. Mr. Parry, you must know, has put my Ode in motion again, and has brought it at last to a conclusion. 'Tis to him, therefore, that you owe the treat which I send you enclosed ; namely, the breast and merry-thought, and rump too of the chicken which I have been chewing so long, that I would give it to the world for neck-beef or cow-heel."

The Ode so rudely spoken of is no less than that *Bard* which for at least a century remained almost without a rival among poems cherished by strictly poetical persons for the qualities of sublimity and pomp of vision. It is only in the very latest generation, and among a school of extremely refined critics that the ascendancy of this ode has been questioned, and certain pieces by Collins and even by Blake preferred to it. There is a great and even a legitimate pleasure in praising that which plainly possesses very high merit, and which has too long been overlooked or neglected ; but we must beware of the paradox which denies beauty in a work of art, *because* beauty has always been discovered there. Gray's *Bard* has enjoyed an instant and sustained popularity, while Collins' noble *Ode to Liberty* has had few admirers and Blake's *Book of Thel* till lately has had none ; but there is no just reason why a wish to assert the value of the patriotic fervour of the one poem and the rosy effusion of the other should prevent us from acknowledging that, great as are the qualities of these pieces, the human sympathy, historical imagination, and sustained dithyrambic dignity of *The Bard* are also great, and probably greater. All that has been said of the evolution of the *Progress of Poesy* is true of that of *The Bard*, while those attributes which our old critics used to term "the machinery" are even more bril

hant and appropriate in the longer poem than in the shorter. In form the poems are sufficiently analogous; each has three main divisions, with strophe, antistrophe, and epode, and in each the epode is dedicated to briskly rhyming measures and experiments in metre. The opening is admirably startling and effective; the voice that meets us with its denunciations is that of the last survivor of the ancient race of Celtic bards, a venerable shape who is seated on a rock above the defile through which the forces of Edward I. are about to march. This mysterious being, in Gray's own words, "with a voice more than human, reproaches the king with all the misery and desolation which he had brought on his country; foretells the misfortunes of the Norman race, and with prophetic spirit declares, that all his cruelty shall never extinguish the noble ardour of poetic genius in this island; and that men shall never be wanting to celebrate true virtue and valour in immortal strains, to expose vice and infamous pleasure, and boldly censure tyranny and oppression." The scheme of the poem, therefore, is strictly historical, and yet is not very far removed from that of Gray's previous written and unwritten Pindaric odes. In these three poems, the dignity of genius and its function as a ruler and benefactor of mankind are made the chief subject of discourse, and a mission is claimed for artists in verse than which none was ever conceived more brilliant or more august. But, fortunately for his readers, Gray was diverted from his purely abstract consideration of history into a concrete observation of its most picturesque forms, and forgot to trace the "noble ardour of poetic genius" in painting vivid pictures of Edward II. enduring his torture in Berkeley Castle, and of the massacre of the bards at the battle of Camlan. Some of the scenes which pass across the magic mirror

of the old man's imagination are unrivalled for concision and force. That in which the court of Elizabeth, surrounded by her lords and her poets, flashes upon the inner eye, is of an inimitable felicity :—

Girt with many a baron bold,
 Sublime their starry fronts they rear ;
 And gorgeous dames, and statesmen old
 In bearded majesty, appear ;
 In the midst a form divine !
 Her eye proclaims her of the Briton-line ;
 Her lion-port, her awe-commanding face,
 Attempered sweet to virgin-grace.
 What strings symphonious tremble in the air,
 What strains of vocal transport round her play.
 Hear from the grave, great Taliessin, hear ;
 They breathe a soul to animate thy clay.
 Bright Rapture calls, and soaring as she sings,
 Waves in the eye of heaven her many-coloured wings.

This closing vision of a pretty but incongruous “Rapture” may remind us that the crowning fault of Gray and his school, their assumption that a mythology might be formed out of the emotions of the human mind, and a new Olympus be fitted out with brand-new gods of a moralist's making, is rarely prominent in *The Bard* or the *Elegy in a Country Churchyard*, his two greatest works. Some use of allegorical abstraction is necessary to the very structure of poetry, and is to be found in the works of our most realistic writers. It is in its excess that it becomes ridiculous or tedious, as in Mason and other imitators of Gray. The master himself was not by any means able at all times to clothe his abstractions with flesh and blood, but he is never ridiculous. He felt, indeed, the danger of the tendency in himself and others, and he made some remarks on the subject to Mason which were wholly salutary :—

I had rather some of these personages, "Resignation," "Pence," "Revenge," "Slaughter," "Ambition," were stripped of their allegorical garb. A little simplicity here and there in the expression would better prepare the high and fantastic strain, and all the imaginable harpings that follow. . . . The true lyric style, with all its flights of fancy, ornaments, and heightening of expression, and harmony of sound, is in its nature superior to every other style; which is just the cause why it could not be borne in a work of great length, no more than the eye could bear to see all this scene that we constantly gaze upon,—the verdure of the fields and woods, the azure of the sea and skies, turned into one dazzling expanse of gems. The epic, therefore, assumed a style of graver colours, and only stuck on a diamond (borrowed from her sister) here and there, where it best became her. When we pass from the diction that suits this kind of writing to that which belongs to the former, it appears natural, and delights us: but to pass on a sudden from the lyric glare to the epic solemnity (if I may be allowed to talk nonsense) has a very different effect. We seem to drop from verse into mere prose, from light into darkness. Do you not think if Mingotti stopped in the middle of her best air, and only repeated the remaining verses (though the best Metastasio ever wrote) that they would not appear very cold to you, and very heavy?

Between Dryden and Wordsworth there was no man but Gray who could write in prose about his art with such coherence and science as this. These careless sentences outweigh tomes of Blair's glittering rhetoric and Hurd's stilted disquisitions on the Beautiful and the Elevated.

Almost directly after Gray had finished *The Bard* he was called upon to write an epitaph for a lady, Mrs. Jane Clarke, who had died in childbirth at Epsom, where her husband was a physician, on the 27th of April, 1757. Dr. Clarke had been an early college friend of Gray's, and he applied to Gray to write a copy of verses to be inscribed

on a tablet in Beckenham Church, where his wife was buried. Gray wrote sixteen lines, not in his happiest vein, and these found their way into print after his death. In his tiny nosegay there is perhaps no flower so inconsiderable as this perfunctory *Epitaph*. One letter, several years later than the date of this poem, proves that Gray continued to write on intimate terms to Dr. Clarke, who does not seem to have preserved the poet's correspondence, and is not otherwise interesting to us. In April Gray made another acquaintance, of a very different kind; Lord Nuneham, a young man of fashion and fortune, with a rage for poetry, came rushing down upon him with a letter of introduction and a profusion of compliments. He brought a large bouquet of jonquils, which he presented to the poet with a reverence so profound that Gray could not fail to smell the jessamine-powder in his periwig, and indeed he was too fine "even for me," says the poet, "who love a little finery." Lord Nuneham came expressly in Newmarket week to protest against going to Newmarket, and sat devoutly at Gray's feet, half fop, half enthusiast, for three whole days, talking about verses and the fine arts. Gray was quite pleased with him at last; and so "we vowed eternal friendship, embraced, and parted." Lord John Cavendish, too, was in Cambridge at this time, and also pleased Gray, though in a very different and less effusive manner.

In the summer of 1757 Horace Walpole set up a printing-press at Strawberry Hill, and persuaded Gray to let his Pindaric Odes be the first issue of the establishment. Accordingly Gray sent him a MS. copy of the poems, and they were set up with wonderful fuss and circumstance by Walpole's compositor; Gray being more than usually often at Strawberry Hill this summer.

Dodsley agreed to publish the book, and 2000 copies were struck off. On the 29th of June Gray received forty guineas, the only money he ever gained by literature. On the 8th of August there was published a large thin quarto, entitled "*Odes* by Mr. Gray. *Φωκάρτα συνέροισι*. Printed at Strawberry Hill for R. and J. Dodsley in Pall Mall," with an engraving of Walpole's little gimerack dwelling on the title-page. The two odes have no other titles than Ode I., Ode II.; they form a pamphlet of twenty-one pages, and were sold at one shilling. Small as the volume was, however, it was by no means insignificant, and it achieved a very great success. Garrick and Warburton led the chorus of praise; the famous actor publishing some verses in honour of the odes, the famous critic pronouncing them above the grasp of the public, and this indeed was true. In fact Gray lamented, as most men of genius have had to lament, that the praise he received was not always judicious praise, and therefore of little worth. "The *Συνέροι*," he says, "appear to be still fewer than even I expected." He became, however, a kind of lion. Goldsmith wrote an examination of the *Odes* for the *Monthly Review*. The Cobhams, at Stoke, were very civil, and Mr. and Mrs. Garrick came down there to stay with him; the stiff, prim demeanour of Dr. Hurd melted into smiles and compliments; the *Critical Review* was in raptures, though it mistook the *Æolian Lyre* for the Harp of *Æolus*; and at York Races sporting peers were heard to discuss the odes in a spirit of bewildered eulogy. Within two months 1300 copies had been sold. Best of all, Miss Speed seemed to understand, and whispered "*Φωκάρτα συνέροισι*," in the most amiable and sympathetic tones. But Gray could enjoy nothing; several little maladies hung over him, the general wreck of his frail

constitution began to be imminent. Meanwhile small things worried him. The great Mr. Fox did not wonder Edward L. could not understand what the Bard was saying, and chuckled at his own wit ; young Lord Nuneham, for all his jonquils and his jessamine-powder, did not trouble himself to acknowledge his presentation copy ; people said Gray's style was "impenetrable and inexplicable," and altogether the sweets were fewer than the bitters in the cup of notoriety.

Gray had placed himself, however, at one leap at the head of the living English poets. Thomson and Blair were now dead, Dyer was about to pass away, and Collins, hopelessly insane, was making the cloisters of Chichester resound with his terrible shrieks. Young, now very aged, had almost abandoned verse. Johnson had retired from all competition with the poets. Smart, whose frivolous verses had been collected in 1754, had shown himself, in his few serious efforts, a direct disciple and imitator of Gray's early style. Goldsmith, Churchill, and Cowper were still unheard of ; and the only men with whom Gray could for a moment be supposed to contend were Shenstone and Akenside. Practically both of these men, also, had retired from poetry, the latter indeed having been silent for twelve years. The *Odes* could hardly fail to attract attention in a year which produced no other even noticeable publication in verse, except Dyer's tiresome descriptive poem of *The Fleece*. Gray seems to have felt that his genius, his "verve" as he called it, was trying to breathe in a vacuum ; and from this time forward he made even less and less effort to concentrate his powers. In the winter of 1757, it is true, he began to plan an epic or didactic poem on the Revival of Learning, but we hear no more of it. His few remaining poems

were to be lyrics, pure and simple, swallow-flights of song.

On the 12th of December, 1757, Colley Cibber died, having held the office of poet laureate for twenty-seven years. Lord John Cavendish immediately suggested to his brother, the Duke of Devonshire, who was then Lord Chamberlain, that as Gray was the greatest living poet, the post should be offered to him. This was immediately done, in very handsome terms, the duke even offering to waive entirely the perfunctory writing of odes, which had hitherto been deemed an annual duty of all poets laureate. Gray directed Mason, through whom the offer had been made, to decline it very civilly :—

Though I well know the bland emollient saponaceous qualities both of sack and silver, yet if any great man would say to me "I make you Rat-catcher to his Majesty, with a salary of 300*l.* a-year and two butts of the best Malaga; and though it has been usual to catch a mouse or two, for form's sake, in public once a year, yet to you, sir, we shall not stand upon these things," I cannot say I should jump at it; nay if they would drop the very name of the office, and call me Sinecure to the King's Majesty, I should still feel a little awkward, and think everybody I saw smelt a rat about me; but I do not pretend to blame any one else that has not the same sensations; for my part I would rather be serjeant-trumpeter or pin-maker to the palace. Nevertheless, I interest myself a little in the history of it, and rather wish somebody may accept it that will retrieve the credit of the thing, if it be retrievable, or ever had any credit. Rowe was, I think, the last man of character that had it. As to Settle, whom you mention, he belonged to my lord mayor, not to the king. Euaden was a person of great hopes in his youth, though at last he turned out a drunken parson. Dryden was as disgraceful to the office, from his character, as the poorest scribbler could have been from his verses. The office itself has

always humbled the professor hitherto (even in an age when kings were somebody), if he were a poor writer by making him more conspicuous, and if he were a good one by setting him at war with the little fry of his own profession, for there are poets little enough to envy even a poet laureate.

The duke acted promptly, for within a week of Cibber's death the laureateship had been offered to Gray, who refused, and to Whitehead, who accepted it. This amiable versifier was perhaps more worthy of the compliment than Mason, who wished for it, and who raged with disappointment.

In January, 1758, Gray seems to have recovered sufficiently to be so busy buying South Sea annuities, and amassing old china jars and three-legged stools with grass-green bottoms, that he could not supply Mason with that endless flood of comment on Mason's odes, tragedies, and epics which the vivacious poetaster demanded. Hurd, in the gentlemanly manner to which Mr. Leslie Stephen has dedicated one stringent page, was calling upon Gray to sympathize with him about the wickedness of "that wretch" Akenside. In all this Gray had but slight interest. His father's fortune, which had reached 10,000*l.* in his mother's careful hands, had been much damaged by the fire in Cornhill, and Gray now sank a large portion of his property in an annuity, that he might enjoy a larger income. During the spring of 1758 he amused himself by writing in the blank leaves of Kitchen's English Atlas *A Catalogue of the Antiquities, Houses, &c., in England and Wales*. This was considerable enough to form a little volume, and in 1774, after Gray's death, Mason printed a few copies of it privately, and sent them round to Gray's friends; and in 1787 issued a second edition for sale.

In April of the same year, 1758, Dr. Wharton lost his eldest and at that time his only son. Gray not only wrote him a very touching letter of condolence, but some verses on the death of the child, which I first printed in 1885 from a MS. in the handwriting of Dyce. In May, Gray started on that architectural tour in the Fens, of which I have already spoken, and in June was summoned to Stoke by the illness of his aunt Mrs. Oliffe, who had a sort of paralytic stroke while walking in the garden. She recovered, however, and Gray returned to London, made a short stay at Hampton with Lord and Lady Cobham, and spent July at Strawberry Hill. In August the Garricks again visited him at Stoke, but he had hardly enough physical strength to endure their vivacity. "They are now gone, and I am not sorry for it, for I grow so old, that, I own, people in high spirits and gaiety overpower me, and entirely take away mine. I can yet be diverted by their sallies, but if they appear to take notice of my dullness, it sinks me to nothing. . . . I continue better than has been usual with me, in the summer, though I neither walk nor take anything: 'tis in mind only that I am weary and disagreeable." His position at Stoke, with Mrs. Oliffe laid up, and poor bed-ridden Mrs. Rogers growing daily weaker and weaker, was not an exhilarating one. Towards the end of September, Mrs. Rogers recovered her speech, which had for several years been almost unintelligible, flickered up for two or three days, and then died. She left Mrs. Oliffe joint executrix of her small property with Gray, who describes himself in November 1758 as "agreeably employed in dividing nothing with an old Harridan, who is the Spawn of Cerberus and the Dragon of Wantley." In January 1759 Mrs. Oliffe having taken herself off to her native country of Norfolk,

Gray closed the house at Stoke Pogis, and from this time forth only visited that village, which had been his home for nearly twenty years, when he was invited to stay at Stoke House. At the same time, to the distress of Dr. Brown, he ceased to reside at Pembroke, and spent the next three years in London.

CHAPTER VII.

BRITISH MUSEUM—NORTON NICHOLLS.

WHEN the Sloane Collection became national property at the death of its founder in 1753, and was incorporated under an act which styled it the British Museum, scholars and antiquaries expected to enter at once upon their inheritance. But a site and a building had to be secured, and when these were discovered, it took a long while to fit up the commodious galleries of Montagu House. On the 15th of January, 1759, the Museum was thrown open to the public, and among the throng of visitors was Gray, who had settled himself and his household gods close by, in Southampton Row, and who for some weeks had been awaiting the official Sesame. He had been seeing something of London society meanwhile, — entertained by Lady Carlisle, invited to meet Rousseau, and attending concerts and plays. He gives some account of the performance of Metastasio's *Ciro Riconosciuto*, with Cocchi's agreeable music.

The British Museum he found "indeed a treasure." It was at first so crowded that "the corner room in the basement, furnished with a wainscot table and twenty chairs," was totally inadequate to supply the demand, and in order to be comfortable it was necessary to book a place a fortnight beforehand. This pressure, however, only lasted

for a very short time ; curiosity was excited by the novelty, but quickly languished, and this little room was found quite ample enough to contain the scholars who frequented it. To reach it, the intrepid reader had to pass in darkness, like Jonah, through the belly of a whale, from which he emerged into the room of the Keeper of Printed Books, Dr. Peter Templeman, a physician who had received this responsible post for having translated *Norden's Travels*, and who resigned it, wearily, in 1761, for a more congenial appointment at the Society of Arts. By July 1759 the rush on the reading-room had entirely subsided, and on the 23rd of that month Gray mentions to Mason that there are only five readers that day. These were Gray himself, Dr. Stukeley the antiquary, and three hack-writers who were copying MSS. for hire.

A little later on, Gray became an amused witness of those factions which immediately broke out among the staff of the British Museum, and which practically lasted until a very few years ago. People who were the diverted or regretful witnesses of dissensions between a late Principal Librarian and the scholars whom he governed may be consoled to learn that things were just as bad in 1759. Dr. Gawin Knight, the first Principal Librarian, a pompous martinet with no pretence to scholarship, made life so impossible to the keepers and assistants that the Museum was completely broken into a servile and a rebellious faction. Gray, moving noiselessly to and fro, noted all this and smiled ; "the whole society, trustees and all, are up in arms, like the fellows of a college." Dr. Knight made no concessions ; the keepers presently refused to salute him when they passed his window, and Gray and his fellow-readers were at last obliged to make a *détour* every day, because Dr. Knight

had walled up a passage in order to annoy the keepers. Meanwhile the trustees were spending 500*l.* a year more than their income, and Gray confidently predicts that before long all the books and the crocodiles and Jonah's whale will be put up to public auction.

At Mr Jermyn's, in Southampton Row, Bloomsbury, Gray was very comfortably settled. It was a cleaner Bloomsbury than we know now, and a brighter. Gray from his bedroom-window looked out on a south-west garden-wall covered with flowering jessamine through June and July. There had been roses, too, in this London garden. Gray must always have flowers about him, and he trudged down to Covent Garden every day, for his sweet peas and pinks, scarlet martagon-lilies, double stocks, and flowering marjoram. His drawing-room looked over Bedford Gardens, and a fine stretch of upland fields, crowned at last, against the sky, by the villages of Highgate and Hampstead. St. Giles's was at his back, with many a dirty court and alley, but in front of him against the morning light, there was little but sunshine and greenery and fresh air. He seems to notice nature here on the outskirts of London far more narrowly than at Cambridge; there are little parenthetical notes, *aides* to himself, about "fair white flying clouds at 9 in the morning" of a July day, or wheelbarrows heaped up with small black cherries on an August afternoon. He bought twenty walnuts for a penny on the 8th of September, and enjoyed a fine perdrigon-plum upon the 4th.

Meanwhile he is working every day at the Museum, feasting upon literary plums and walnuts, searching the original Ledger-Book of the Signet, copying Sir Thomas Wyatt's *Defence* and his poems, discovering "several odd things unknown to our historians," and

nursing his old favourite project of a *History of English Poetry*. He spent as a rule four hours a day in the reading-room, this being as much as his very delicate health could bear, for repeated attacks of the gout had made even this amount of motion and cramped repose sometimes very difficult.

On the 23rd of September, 1759, poor Lady Cobham, justly believing herself to be dying, summoned Gray down to Stoke House. She was suffering from dropsy, and being in a very depressed condition of mind, desired him not to leave her. He accordingly remained with her three weeks, and then accompanied her and Miss Speed to town, whither Lady Cobham was recommended to come for advice. She still did not wish to part from him, and he stayed until late in November in her house in Hanover Square. He has some picturesque notes of the beautiful old garden at Stoke that autumn, rich with carnations, marygolds and asters, and with great clusters of white grapes on warm south walls. After watching beside Lady Cobham for some weeks, and finding no reason to anticipate a sudden change in her condition, he returned to his own lodging in Southampton Row, and plunged again into MSS. of Lydgate and Hoccleve.

It was while Gray was quietly vegetating in Bloomsbury that an event occurred of which he was quite unconscious, which yet has singularly endeared him to the memory of Englishmen. On the evening of the 12th of September, 1759,—while Gray, sauntering back from the British Museum to his lodgings, noted that the weather was cloudy, with a S.S.W. wind,—on the other side of the Atlantic the English forces lay along the river Montmorency, and looked anxiously across at Quebec and at the fateful heights of Abraham. When night-fall came.

and before the gallant four thousand obeyed the word of command to steal across the river, General Wolfe, the young officer of thirty-three, who was next day to win death and immortality in victory, crept along in a boat from post to post to see that all was ready for the expedition. It was a fine, silent evening, and as they pulled along, with muffled oars, the General recited to one of his officers who sat with him in the stern of the boat nearly the whole of Gray's *Elegy in a Country Churchyard*, adding, as he concluded, "I would prefer being the author of that Poem to the glory of beating the French to-morrow." Perhaps no finer compliment was ever paid by the man of action to the man of imagination, and, sanctified, as it were, by the dying lips of the great English hero, the poem seems to be raised far above its intrinsic rank in literature, and to demand our respect as one of the acknowledged glories of our race and language. This beautiful anecdote of Wolfe rests on the authority of Professor Robison, the mathematician, who was a recruit in the engineers during the attack upon Quebec, and happened to be present in the boat when the General recited Gray's poem.

Poor Gray, ever pursued by the terrors of arson, had a great fright in the last days of November in this year. A fire broke out in the house of an organist on the opposite side of Southampton Row, and the poor householder was burned to death; the fire spread to the house of Gray's lawyer, who fortunately saved his papers. A few nights later, the poet was roused by a conflagration close at hand in Lincoln's Inn Fields. "'Tis strange," he says, in a spirit of desperation, "that we all of us here in town lay ourselves down every night on our funeral pile, ready made, and compose ourselves to rest, while every drunken footman and drowsy old woman has a candle

ready to light it before the morning." It is rather difficult to know what, even in so pastoral a Bloomsbury, Gray did with a sow, for which he thanks Wharton heartily in April 1760.

In the spring of this year Gray first met Sterne, who had just made an overwhelming success with *Tristram Shandy*, and who was sitting to Sir Joshua Reynolds. Gray's opinion of Sterne was not entirely unfavourable; the great humorist was polite to him, and his works were not by nature so perplexing to Gray as those of Smollett and Fielding. The poet was interested in Sterne's newly-discovered emotion, sensibility, and told Nicholls afterwards that in this sort of pathos Sterne never failed; for his wit he had less patience, and frankly disapproved his tittering insinuations. He said that there was good writing and good sense in Sterne's *Sermons*, and spoke of him, when he died in 1768, with some respect. A less famous but pleasanter man, whose acquaintance Gray began to cultivate about this time was Benjamin Stillingfleet, the Blue Stocking.

In April 1760 Lady Cobham was at last released from her sufferings. She left the whole of her property, 30,000*l.*, to Harriet Speed, besides the house in Hanover Square, plate, jewels, and much blue and white china. Gray tells Wharton darkly that Miss Speed does not know her own mind, but that he knows his. The movements of this odd couple during the summer of 1760 are very dim to us and perplexing. Why they seem associated in some sort of distant intimacy from April to June, why in the latter month they go down together to stay with General Conway and Lady Ailesbury at Park Place, near Henley, and why Lady Carlisle is of the party, these are questions that now can only tantalize

us. Gray himself confesses that all the world expected him to marry Miss Speed, and was astonished that Lady Cobham only left him 20*l.* for a mourning ring. It seems likely on the whole that had he been inclined to endow Harriet Speed with his gout, his poverty, his melancholy, and his fitful genius, she would have accepted the responsibility. When she did marry, it was not for money or position. He probably, for his part, did not feel so passionately inclined to her as to convince himself that he ought to think of marriage. He put an air of Geminiani to words for her, not very successfully, and he wrote one solitary strain of amatory experience :—

With beauty, with pleasure surrounded, to languish,
To weep without knowing the cause of my anguish,
To start from short slumbers, and wish for the morning—
To close my dull eyes when I see it returning,
Sighs sudden and frequent, looks ever dejected,—
Words that steal from my tongue, by no meaning connected!
Ah' say, fellow-swains, how these symptoms befell me?
They smile, but reply not—Sure Delia will tell me!

For a month in the summer of 1760 he lived at Park Place in the company of Miss Speed, Lady Ailesbury, and Lady Carlisle, who laughed from morning to night, and would not allow him to give way to what they called his "sulkiness." They found him a difficult guest to entertain. Lady Ailesbury told Walpole afterwards that one day when they went out for a picnic, Gray only opened his lips once, and then merely to say, "Yes, my Lady, I believe so." His own account shows that his nerves were in a very weary condition. "Company and cards at home, parties by land and water abroad, and what they call *doing something*, that is, ricketing about from morning to night, are occupations, I find, that wear out my spirits, especially in

a situation where one might sit still, and be alone with pleasure." Early in August he escaped to the quietness of Cambridge in the Long Vacation, and after this saw little of Miss Speed. Next January she married a poor man ten years younger than herself, a Baron de la Peyrière, and went to live at Viry, on the Lake of Geneva. Here, long after the death of the poet, she received a Mr. Leman, and gave into his hands the lines which Gray had addressed to her. So ended his one feeble and shadowy romance. Gray was not destined to come within the genial glow of any woman's devotion, except his mother's. He lived a life apart from the absorbing emotions of humanity, desirous to sympathize with but not to partake in the stationary affections and household pleasures of the race. In the annals of friendship he is eminent; he did not choose to tempt fortune by becoming a husband and a father. There are some beautiful words of Sir Thomas Browne that come before the mind as singularly appropriate to Gray:—"I never yet cast a true affection on a woman; but I have loved my friend, as I do virtue, my soul, my God."

In July 1760 there were published anonymously *Two Odes*, addressed to Obscurity and to Oblivion, which were attacks on Gray and on Mason respectively. It was not at first recognized that this was a salute fired off by that group of young satirists from Westminster, of whom Cowper, Lloyd and Churchill are now the best known. These odes, indeed, were probably a joint production, but the credit of them was taken by George Colman (the elder) and by Robert Lloyd, gay young wits of twenty-seven. The mock odes, in which the manners of Gray and Mason were fairly well parodied, attracted a good deal more notice than they were worth, and the *Monthly Review*

challenged the poets to reply. But Gray warned Mason not to do so. Colman was a friend of Garrick, while Lloyd was an impassioned admirer of Gray himself, and there was no venom in the verses. Lloyd, indeed, had the naïveté to reprint these odes some years afterwards, in a volume which bore his name, and which contained a Latin version of the *Elegy in a Country Churchyard*. Lloyd was a figure of no importance, a mere shadow cast before by Churchill.

In 1760 Gray became deeply interested in the Erse Fragments of Macpherson, soon to come before the world as the epic of *Ossian*. He corresponded with the young Scotchman of twenty-two, whom he found stupid and ill-educated, and, in Gray's opinion, quite incapable of having invented what he was at this time producing. The elaborate pieces, the narratives of *Cromach*, *Fingal* and the rest, were not at this time thought of, and it seems on the whole that the romantic fragments so much admired by the best judges of poetry were genuine. What is interesting to us in Gray's connexion with *Ossian* is partly critical and partly personal. Critically it is very important to see that the romantic tendency of his mind asserted itself at once in the presence of this savage poetry. He quotes certain phrases with high approbation. *Ossian* says of the winds, "Their songs are of other worlds:" Gray exclaims, "Did you never observe that pause, as the gust is recollecting itself, and rising upon the ear in a shrill and plaintive note like the swell of an *Æolian* harp? I do assure you there is nothing in the world so like the voice of a spirit." These pieces produced on him just the same effect of exciting and stimulating mystery that had been caused by his meeting with the ballads of *Gil Morice* and *Cherry Chase* in 1757. He began to feel, just as the power

of writing verse was leaving him or seemed to be declining, that the deepest chords of his nature as a poet had never yet been struck. From this time forth what little serious poetry he wrote was distinctly romantic, and his studies were all in the direction of what was savage and archaic, the poetry of the precursors of our literature in England and Scotland, the runic chants of the Scandinavians, the war-songs of the primitive Gaels, everything, in fact, which for a century past had been looked upon as ungenteel and incorrect in literature. Personally what is interesting in his introduction to Ossian is his sudden sympathy with men like Adam Smith and David Hume, for whom he had been trained in the school of Warburton and Hurd to cultivate a fanatic hatred. In the summer of 1760 a variety of civilities on the absorbing question of the Erse Fragments passed between him and the great historian. Hume had written to a friend:—"It gives me pleasure to find that a person of so fine a taste as Mr. Gray approves of these fragments, as it may convince us that our fondness of them is not altogether founded on national prepossession," and Gray was encouraged by this to enter into correspondence of a most friendly kind with the dangerous enemy of orthodoxy. He never quite satisfied himself about Ossian; his last word on that subject is:—"For me, I admire nothing but *Fingal*, yet I remain still in doubt about the authenticity of these poems, though inclining rather to believe them genuine in spite of the world. Whether they are the inventions of antiquity, or of a modern Scotchman, either case to me is alike unaccountable. *Je m'y perds.*" Modern scholarship has really not progressed much nearer to a solution of the puzzle.

Partly at the instance of Mason, Gray took a considerable interest in the exhibition of the Society of Arts at the

Adelphi, in 1760. This was the first collection of the kind made in London, and was the nucleus out of which the institution of the Royal Academy sprang. The genius of this first exhibition was Paul Sandby, a man whom Mason thought he had discovered, and whom he was constantly recommending to Gray. Sandby, afterwards eminent as the first great English water-colour painter, had at this time hardly discovered his vocation, though he was in his thirty-fifth year. He was still designing architecture and making profitless gibes and lampoons against Hogarth. Gray and Mason appear to have drawn his attention to landscape of a romantic order, and in October, 1760, Gray tells Wharton of a great picture in oils, illustrating *The Bard*, with Edward I. in the foreground and Snowdon behind, which Sandby and Mason have concocted together, and which is to be the former's exhibition picture for 1761. Sandby either repeated this subject, or took another from the same poem, for there exists a picture of his, without any Edward I., in which the Bard is represented as plunging into the roaring tide, with his lyre in his hand, and Snowdon behind him.

During the winter of 1760 and the spring of 1761 Gray seems to have given his main attention to early English poetry. He worked at the British Museum with indefatigable zeal, copying with his own hand the whole of the very rare 1579 edition of Gawin Douglas' *Palace of Honour*, which he greatly admired, and composing those interesting and learned studies on *Metre* and on the *Poetry of John Lydgate* which Mathias first printed in 1814.

Warburton had placed in his hands a rough sketch which Pope had drawn out of a classification of the British Poets. Pope's knowledge did not go very far, and Gray seems to have first formed the notion of himself writing a

History of English Poetry while correcting his predecessor's errors. The scheme of his history is one which will probably be followed by the historian of our poetry, when such a man arises; Gray proposed to open by a full examination of the Provençal school, in which he saw the germ of all the modern poetry of Western Europe; from Provence to France and Italy, and thence to England the transition was to be easy; and it was only after bringing up the reader to the mature style of Gower and Chaucer, that a return was to be made to the native, that is the Anglo-Saxon elements of our literature. Gray made a variety of purchases for use in this projected compilation, and according to his MS. account-book he had some "finds" which are enough to make the modern bibliomaniac mad with envy. He gave sixpence each for the 1587 edition of Golding's *Ovid* and the 1607 edition of Phaer's *Æneid*, while the 1550 edition of John Heywood's *Fables* seems to have been thrown in for nothing, to make up the parcel. Needless to say that after consuming months and years in preparing materials for his great work, Gray never completed or even began it, and in April, 1770, learning from Hurd that Thomas Warton was about to essay the same labour, he placed all his notes and memoranda in Warton's hands. The result, which Gray never lived to see, was creditable and valuable, and even now is not entirely antiquated; it was very different, however, from what the world would have had every right to expect from Gray's learning, taste and method.

Two short poems composed in the course of 1761 next demand our attention. The first is a sketch of Gray's own character, which was found in one of his note-books:—

Too poor for a bribe, and too proud to importune,
He had not the method of making a fortune ;
Could love, and could hate, so was thought somewhat odd ;
No very great wit, he believed in a God ;
A post or a pension he did not desire,
But left church and state to Charles Townshend and Squire.

It has been commonly supposed that these lines suggested to Goldsmith his character of Burke in *Retaliation*. Charles Townshend is the famous statesman, surnamed the Weathercock ; the Rev. Samuel Squire was much more obscure, an intriguing fellow of a Cambridge college who had just contrived to wriggle into the bishopric of St. David's. Warburton said that Squire "made religion his trade." At the storming of Belleisle, June, 13, 1761, Sir William Williams, a young soldier with whom Gray was slightly acquainted, was killed, and the Montagus, who proposed to erect a monument to him, applied to Gray for an epitaph. After considerable difficulty, in August of that year, Gray contrived to squeeze out three of his stately quatrains. Walpole describes Williams as "a gallant and ambitious young man, who had devoted himself to war and politics," and to whom Frederic Montagu was warmly attached. Gray, however, expresses no strong personal feeling, and did not indeed know much of the subject of his elegy. It is curious that in a letter to Dr Brown, dated Oct. 23, 1760, Gray mentions that Sir W. Williams is starting on the expedition that proved fatal to him, and predicts that he "may lay his fine Vandyck head in the dust."

For two years Gray had kept his rooms at Cambridge locked up, except during the Long Vacation, but in the early spring of 1761, he began to think of returning to what was really home for him. He ran down for a few

days in January, but found Cambridge too cold, and told Dr. Brown not to expect him till the codlin hedge at Pembroke was out in blossom. Business, however, delayed him, against his will, until June, when he settled in college. In September he came up again to London to be present at the Coronation of George III., on which occasion he was accommodated with a place in the Lord Chamberlain's box. "The Bishop of Rochester would have dropped the crown if it had not been pinned to the cushion, and the king was often obliged to call out, and set matters right; but the sword of state had been entirely forgot, so Lord Huntingdon was forced to carry the lord mayor's great two-handed sword instead of it. This made it later than ordinary before they got under their canopies and set forward. I should have told you that the old Bishop of Lincoln, with his stick, went doddling by the side of the Queen, and the Bishop of Chester had the pleasure of bearing the gold paten. When they were gone, we went down to dinner, for there were three rooms below, where the Duke of Devonshire was so good as to feed us with great cold sirloins of beef, legs of mutton, fillets of veal, and other substantial viands and liquors, which we devoured all higgledy-piggledy, like porters; after which every one scrambled up again, and seated themselves."

In the winter of 1761 Gray was curiously excited by the arrival at Cambridge of Mr. Delaval, a former fellow of the college, bringing with him a set of musical glasses. To Mason, Gray writes on the 8th of December:—

Of all loves come to Cambridge out of hand, for here is Mr. Delaval and a charming set of glasses that sing like nightingales; and we have concerts every other night, and shall stay here this month or two; and a vast deal of good company, and a whale in pickle just come from Ipswich; and the man will

not die, and Mr. Wood is gone to Chatsworth; and there is nobody but you and Tom and the curled dog, and do not talk of the charge, for we will make a subscription; besides, we know you always come when you have a mind.

As early as 1760, probably during one of his flying visits to Cambridge, Gray had a young fellow introduced to him of whom he seems at that time to have taken no notice, but who was to become the most intimate and valued of his friends. No person has left so clear and circumstantial an account of the appearance, conduct, and sayings of Gray as the Rev. Norton Nicholls of Blundeston, in 1760 an undergraduate at Trinity Hall, and between eighteen and nineteen years of age. Nicholls afterwards told Mathias that the lightning brightness of Gray's eye was what struck him most in his first impression, and he used the phrase "*fulgorante sguardo*" to express what he meant. A little later than this, at a social gathering in the rooms of a Mr. Lobbs, at Peterhouse, Nicholls formed one of a party who collected round Gray's chair and listened to his bright conversation. The young man was too modest to join in the talk, until, in reply to something that had been said on the use of bold metaphors in poetry, Gray quoted Milton's "The sun to me is dark, and silent as the moon;" upon this Nicholls ventured to ask whether this might not possibly be imitated from Dante, "*Miripungeva la dove il sol tace.*" Gray turned quickly round and said, "Sir, do you read Dante?" and immediately entered into conversation with him. He found Nicholls an intelligent and sympathetic student of literature; he chiefly addressed him through the remainder of the evening; and when they came to part, he pressed him to visit him in his own rooms at Pembroke.

Gray had never forgotten the Italian which he had learned in his youth, and he was deeply read in Dante, Petrarch, Ariosto, and Tasso, while disdaining those popular poets of the eighteenth century who at that time enjoyed more consideration in their native land than the great classics of the country. One of his proofs of favour to his young friend Nicholls was to lend him his marked and annotated copy of Petrarch; and he was pleased when Nicholls was the first to trace in the *Purgatorio* the lines which suggested a phrase in the *Elegy in a Country Churchyard*. It was doubtless with a side-glance at his own starved condition of genius that he told Nicholls that he thought it "an advantage to Dante to have been produced in a rude age of strong and uncontrolled passions, when the Muse was not checked by refinement and the fear of criticism." For the next three years we must consider Gray as constantly cheered by the sympathy and enthusiasm of young Nicholls, though it is not until 1764 that we come upon the first of the invaluable letters which the latter received from his great friend.

Nothing could be more humdrum than Gray's existence about this time. There is no sign of literary life in him, and the whole year 1762 seems only broken by a journey northwards in the summer. Towards the end of June, he went to stay at York for a fortnight with Mason, whose "insatiable avarice," as Gray calls it in writing to him, had been lulled for a little while by the office of residentiary of York Cathedral. Mason was now grown lazy and gross, sitting "like a Japanese divinity, with his hands folded on his fat belly," and so prosperous that Gray recommends him to "shut his insatiable repining mouth." There was a fund of good-humour about Mason, and under all the satire of his friend he does not seem to have shown

the least irritation. From York, Gray went on to Durham, to stay with Wharton at Old Park, where he was extremely happy; "we take in no newspaper or magazine, but the cream and butter are beyond compare." He made a long stay, and rather late in the autumn set out for a tour in Yorkshire by himself. Through driving rain he saw what he could of Richmond and of Ripon, but was fortunate enough to secure some gleams of sunshine for an examination of Fountains Abbey. At Sheffield, then pastoral and pretty still, he admired the charming situation of the town, and so came at last to Chatsworth and Hardwicke, at which latter place "one would think Mary Queen of Scots was but just walked down into the park with her guard for half an hour." After passing through Chesterfield and Mansfield, Gray descended the Trent, spent two or three days at Nottingham, and came up to London by the coach.

He arrived to find letters awaiting him, and a great pother. Dr. Shallet Turner of Peterhouse, Professor of Modern History and Modern Languages at Cambridge, had been dead a fortnight, and Gray's friends were very anxious to secure the vacant post for him. The chair had been founded by George I. in 1724, and the stipend was 400*l*. It was not expected that any lectures should be given; as a matter of fact not one lecture was delivered until after Gray's death. Shallet Turner had succeeded Samuel Harris, the first professor, in 1735, and had held the sinecure for twenty-seven years. Gray's friends encouraged him to think that Lord Bute would look favourably on his claims, partly because of his fame as a poet, and partly because Bute's creature, Sir Henry Erskine, was a great friend of Gray's; but Sir Francis Blake Delaval had in the meantime secured the interest of the Duke of Newcastle for his own kinsman. Early in November it was

generally reported that Delaval had been appointed, but a month later the post was actually given to Lawrence Brockett of Trinity, who held it until 1768, when he was succeeded by Gray. This is the only occasion upon which the poet, in an age when the most greedy and open demands for promotion were considered in no way dishonourable, persuaded his haughty and independent spirit to ask for anything; in this one case he gave way to the importunities of a crowd of friends, who declared that he had but to put out his hand and take the fruit that was ready to drop into it.

In the spring of 1763 Gray was recalled to the pursuit of literature by the chance that a friend of his, a Mr. Howe, of Pembroke, while travelling in Italy, met the celebrated critic and commentator Count Francesco Algarotti, to whom he presented Gray's poems. The Count read them with rapturous admiration, and passed them on to the young poet Agostino Paradisi, with a recommendation that he should translate them into Italian. The reputation of Algarotti was then a European one, and Gray was very much flattered at the graceful and ardent compliments of so famous a connoisseur. "I was not born so far from the sun," he says, in a letter dated February 17th, 1763, "as to be ignorant of Count Algarotti's name and reputation; nor am I so far advanced in years, or in philosophy, as not to feel the warmth of his approbation. The odes in question, as their motto shows, were meant to be *vocal to the intelligent alone*. How few *they* were in my own country, Mr. Howe can testify; and yet my ambition was terminated by that small circle. I have good reason to be proud, if my voice has reached the ear and apprehension of a stranger, distinguished as one of the best judges in Europe." Algarotti replied that England, which had already enjoyed a Homer, an Archimedes, a Demosthenes,

now possessed a Pindar also, and enclosed "observations, that is panegyrics" on the *Odes*. For some months the correspondence of Count Algarotti enlivened "the nothingness" of Gray's history at Cambridge, "a place," he says, "where no events grow, though we preserve those of former days by way of *hortus siccus* in our libraries." In November 1763 the Count announced his intention of visiting England, where he proposed to publish a magnificent edition of his own works, Gray seems to have anticipated pleasure from his company, but Algarotti never came, and soon died rather unexpectedly, in Italy, on the 24th of May, 1764, at the age of fifty-two.

We possess some of the notes which Gray took of the habits of flowers and birds, thus anticipating the charming observations of Gilbert White. At Cambridge, in 1763, crocus and hepatica were blossoming through the snow in the college garden on the 12th of February; nine days later brought the first white butterfly; on the 5th of March Gray heard the thrush sing, and on the 8th the skylark. The same warm day which brought the lark opened the blossom-buds of the apricots, and the almond-trees for once found themselves out-run in the race of spring. These notes show the quickness of Gray's eye, and his quiet ways. It is only the silent, clear-sighted man that knows on what day the first fall of lady-birds is seen, or observes the redstart sitting on her eggs. Gray's notes for the spring of 1763 read like fragments of a beautiful poem, and are scarcely less articulate than that little trill of improvised song which Norton Nicholls has preserved: -

There pipes the wood-lark, and the song-thrush there
Scatters his loose notes in the waste of air,

a couplet which Gray made one spring morning, as Nicholls

and he were walking in the fields in the neighbourhood of Cambridge.

To this period should be attributed the one section of Gray's poems which it is impossible to date with exactness, namely the romantic lyrics paraphrased, in short measures, from Icelandic and Gaelic sources.¹ When these pieces were published, in 1768, Gray prefixed to them an "advertisement," which was not reprinted. In this he connected them with his projected *History of English Poetry*; "in the introduction" to that work, "he meant to have produced some specimens of the style that reigned in ancient times among the neighbouring nations, or those who had subdued the greater part of this island, and were only progenitors: the following three imitations made a part of them." The three imitations are *The Fatal Sisters*, *The Descent of Odin*, and *The Triumphs of Owen*. To these must be added the smaller fragments, *The Death of Hoel*, *Caradoc*, and *Conon*, discovered among Gray's papers, and first printed by Mason. These, then, form a division of Gray's poetical work not inconsiderable in extent, remarkably homogeneous in style and substance, and entirely distinct from anything else which he wrote. In these paraphrases of archaic chants he appears as a purely romantic poet, and heralds the approach of Sir Walter Scott, and the whole revival of northern romance. The Norse pieces are perhaps more interesting than the Celtic; they are longer, and to modern scholarship seem more authentic, at all events more in the general current of literature. Moreover they were translated direct from the Icelandic, whereas there is no absolute proof that Gray was a Welsh scholar. It may well inspire us with admiration of the poet's intellectual

¹ I notice that the *The Fatal Sisters* and *The Descent of Odin* bear the date 1761 in the Pembroke MSS.

energy to find that he had mastered a language which was hardly known, at that time, by any one in Europe, except a few learned Icelanders, whose native tongue made it easy for them to understand *Norrœna*. Gray must have puzzled it out for himself, probably with the help of the *Index Linguae Scytho-Scandicae* of Verelius. At that time what he rightly calls the Norse Tongue was looked upon as a sort of mystery ; it was called "Runick," and its roots were supposed to be derived from the Hebrew. The *Fatal Sisters* is a lay of the eleventh century, the text of which Gray found in one of the compilations of Torfœus (Thormod Torveson), a great collector of ancient Icelandic vellums at the close of the seventeenth century. It is a monologue, sung by one of the Valkyriur or Choosers of the Slain to her three sisters ; the measure is one of great force and fire, an alternate rhyming of seven-syllable lines, of which this is a specimen :—

Now the storm begins to lower,
 (Haste, the loom of Hell prepare !)
 Iron-sleet of arrowy shower
 Hurbles in the darkened air.

 Ere the ruddy sun be set
 Pikes must shiver, javelins sing,
 Blade with clattering buckler meet,
 Hauberk crash, and helmet ring.

 Sisters, hence with spurs of speed ;
 Each her thundering falchion wield ;
 Each bestride her sable steed,
 Hurry, hurry to the field !

The *Descent of Odin* is a finer poem, better paraphrased. Gray found the original in a book by Bartolinus, one of the

five great physicians of that name who flourished in Denmark during the seventeenth century. The poem itself is the *Vegtamskvida*, one of the most powerful and mysterious of those ancient lays which form the earliest collection we possess of Scandinavian poetry. It is probable that Gray never saw the tolerably complete but very inaccurate edition of *Sæmundar Edda* which existed in his time, nor knew the wonderful history of this collection, which was discovered in Iceland, in 1643, by Brynjólfur Sveinsson, Bishop of Skálholt. The text which Gray found in Bartolinus, however, was sufficiently true to enable him to make a better translation of the *Vegtamskvida* than any which has been attempted since, and to make us deeply regret that he did not "imitate" more of these noble Eddaic chants. He even attempts a philological ingenuity, for, finding that Odin, to conceal his true nature from the Völva, calls himself Vegtam, Gray translates this strange word "traveller," evidently tracing it to *veg*, a way. He omits the first stave, which recounts how the Æsir sat in council to deliberate on the dreams of Balder, and he also omits four spurious stanzas, in this showing a critical tact little short of miraculous, considering the condition of scholarship at that time. The version itself is as poetical as it is exact :—

Right against the eastern gate,
By the moss-grown pile he sate ;
Where long of yore to sleep was laid
The dust of the prophetic Maid.
Facing to the northern clime,
Thrice he traced the runic rhyme ;
Thrice pronounced, in accents dread,
The thrilling verse that wakes the Dead ;
Till from out the hollow ground
Slowly breathed a sullen sound.

or,

Mantling in the goblet see
The pure beverage of the bee,
O'er it hangs the shield of gold;
'Tis the drink of Balder bold.
Balder's head to death is given.
Pain can reach the sons of Heaven!
Unwilling I my lips unclose,
Leave me, leave me, to repose,

must be compared with the original to show how thoroughly the terse and rapid evolution of the strange old lay has been preserved, though the concise expression has throughout been modernized and rendered intelligible.

In these short pieces we see the beginning of that return to old Norse themes which has been carried so far and so brilliantly by later poets. It is a very curious thing that Gray in this anticipated, not merely his own countrymen, but the Scandinavians themselves. The first poems in which a Danish poet showed any intelligent appreciation of his national mythology and history, were the *Rolf Krake* and *Balder's Död* of Johannes Ewald, published respectively in 1770 and 1773. Gray therefore takes the precedence not only of Sir Walter Scott, Mr. Morris and other British poets, but even of the countless Danish, Swedish, and German writers who for a century past have celebrated the adventures of the archaic heroes of their race.

In a century which was inclined to begin the history of English poetry with the Life of Cowley, and which distrusted all that was ancient, as being certainly rude and probably worthless, Gray held the opinion, which he expresses in a letter of the 17th of February, 1763, "that without any respect of climates, imagination reigns

in all nascent societies of men, where the necessities of life force every one to think and act much for himself." This critical temper attracted him to the *Edda*, made him indulgent to Ossian, and led him to see more poetry in the ancient songs of Wales than most non-Celtic readers can discover there. In 1764 Evans published his *Specimens of Welsh Poetry*, and in that bulky quarto Gray met with a Latin prose translation of the chant written about 1158 by Gwalchmai, in praise of his master Owen Gwynedd. The same Evans gave a variety of extracts from the Welsh epic, the *Gododin*, and three of these fragments Gray turned into English rhyme. One has something of the concision of an epigram from the Greek mythology:—

Have ye seen the tusky boar,
Or the bull, with sullen roar,
On surrounding foes advance?
So Caradoc bore his lance.

The others are not nearly equal in poetical merit to the Scandinavian paraphrases. Gray does not seem to have shown these romances to his friends, with the same readiness that he displayed on other occasions. From critics like Hurd and Warburton he could expect no approval of themes taken from an antique civilization. Walpole, who did not see these poems till they were printed, asks:—"Who can care through what horrors a Runic savage arrived at all the joys and glories they could conceive,—the supreme felicity of boozing ale out of the skull of an enemy in Odin's Hall?" This is quite a characteristic expression of that wonderful eighteenth century through which poor Gray wandered in a life-long exile. The author of the *Vegtamskvida* a "Runic savage"! No wonder Gray kept his "Imitations" safely out of the sight of such critics.

CHAPTER VIII.

LIFE AT CAMBRIDGE—ENGLISH TRAVELS.

THE seven remaining years of Gray's life were even less eventful than those which we have already examined. In November 1763 he began to find that a complaint, which had long troubled him, the result of failing constitution, had become almost constant. For eight or nine months he was an acute sufferer, until in July 1764 he consented to undergo the operation without which he could not have continued to live. Dr. Wharton volunteered to come up from Durham, and, if not to perform the act, to support his friend in "the perilous hour." But Gray preferred that the Cambridge surgeon should attend him, and the operation was not only performed successfully, but the poet was able to sustain the much-dreaded suffering with fortitude. As he was beginning to get about again, the gout came in one foot, "but so tame you might have stroked it, such a minikin you might have played with it; in three or four days it had disappeared." This gout which troubled him so constantly, and was fatal to him at last, was hereditary, and not caused by any excess in eating or drinking; Gray was, in fact, singularly abstemious, and it was one of the accusations of his enemies that he affected to be so dainty that he could touch nothing less delicate than apricot marmalade.

While Gray was lying ill, Lord Chancellor Hardwicke died, at the age of seventy-four, on the 16th of May 1764. The office of Seneschal of the University was thus vacated, and there ensued a very violent contest, the result of which was that Philip Hardwicke succeeded to his father's honours by a majority of one, and the other candidate, the notorious John, Earl of Sandwich, though supported by the aged Dr. Roger Long and other clerical magnates, was rejected. Gray, to whom the tarnished reputation of Lord Sandwich was in the highest degree abhorrent, swelled the storm of electioneering by a lampoon, *The Candidate*, beginning :—

When sly Jemmy Twitcher had smugged up his face,
With a lick of court white-wash, and pious grimace,
A-wooing he went, where three sisters of old
In harmless society guttle and scold.

Lord Sandwich found that this squib was not without its instant and practical effect, and he attempted to win so dangerous an opponent to his side. What means he adopted cannot be conjectured, but they were unsuccessful. Lord Sandwich said to Cradock, "I have my private reasons for knowing Gray's absolute inveteracy." The *Candidate* found its way into print long after Gray's death, but only in a fragmentary form ; and the same has hitherto been true of *Tophet*, of which I am able to give, for the first time, a complete text from the Pembroke MSS. One of Gray's particular friends, "placid Mr. Tyson of Bene't College," made a drawing of the Rev. Henry Etough, a converted Jew, a man of slanderous and violent temper, who had climbed into high preferment in the Church of England. Underneath this very rude and hideous caricature Gray wrote these lines :—

Thus Tophet look'd : so grinn'd the brawling fiend,
Whilst frightened prelates bow'd and call'd him friend ;
I saw them bow, and, while they wish'd him dead,
With servile simper nod the nutted head.
Our mother-church, with half-averted sight,
Blush'd as she bless'd her griesly proselyte ;
Hosannas rang through hell's tremendous borders,
And Satan's self had thoughts of taking orders.

These two pieces, however, are very far from being the only effusions of the kind which Gray wrote. Mason appears to have made a collection of Gray's Cambridge squibs, which he did not venture to print. A *Satire upon the Heads, or Never a barrel the better Herring*, a comic piece in which Gray attacked the prominent heads of houses, was printed by me in 1884 from a MS. in possession of the late Lord Houghton. These squibs are said to have been widely circulated in Cambridge, so widely as to frighten the timid poet, and to have been retained as part of the tradition of Pembroke common-room until long after Gray's death. I am told that Mason's set of copies of these poems, of which I have seen a list, turned up, during the present century, in the library of a cathedral in the north of England. This may give some clue to their ultimate discovery ; they might prove to be coarse and slight, they could not fail to be biographically interesting.

In October 1764 Gray set out upon what he called his "Lilliputian travels" in the south of England. He went down by Winchester to Southampton, stayed there some weeks, and then returned to London by Salisbury, Wilton, Amesbury and Stonehenge. "I proceed to tell you," he says to Norton Nicholls, "that my health is much improved by the sea ; not that I drank it, or bathed in it, as the common people do. No ! I only walked by

it and looked upon it." His description of Netley Abbey, in a letter to Dr. Brown, is very delicate :—" It stands in a little quiet valley, which gradually rises behind the ruins into a half-circle crowned with thick wood. Before it, on a descent, is a thicket of oaks, that serves to veil it from the broad day, and from profane eyes, only leaving a peep on both sides, where the sea appears glittering through the shade, and vessels, with their white sails, glide across and are lost again. . . . I should tell you that the ferryman who rowed me, a lusty young fellow, told me that he would not, for all the world, pass a night at the Abbey, there were such things seen near it." Still more picturesque, indeed showing an eye for nature which was then without a precedent in modern literature, is this passage from a letter of this time to Norton Nicholls :—

I must not close my letter without giving you one principal event of my history ; which was, that (in the course of my late tour) I set out one morning before five o'clock, the moon shining through a dark and misty autumnal air, and got to the sea-coast time enough to be at the Sun's levée. I saw the clouds and dark vapours open gradually to right and left, rolling over one another in great smoky wreaths, and the tide (as it flowed gently in upon the sands) first whitening, then slightly tinged with gold and blue ; and all at once a little line of insufferable brightness that (before I can write these few words) was grown to half an orb, and now to a whole one, too glorious to be distinctly seen. It is very odd it makes no figure on paper ; yet I shall remember it as long as the sun, or at least as long as I endure. I wonder whether anybody ever saw it before ! I hardly believe it.

In November Gray was laid up again with illness, being threatened this time with blindness, a calamity

which passed off favourably. He celebrated the death of Churchill, which occurred at this time, by writing what he calls "The Temple of Tragedy." We do not know what this may have been, but it would not be inspired by love of Churchill, who, in the course of his brief rush through literature in the guise of a "rogue" elephant, had annoyed Gray, though he had never tossed him or trampled on him. Gray bought all the pamphlet-satires of Churchill as they appeared, and enriched them with annotations. In his collection, the *Ghost* alone is missing, perhaps because of the allusions it contained to himself.

On the 24th of December, 1764, that Gothic romance, the *Castle of Otranto*, was published anonymously. It was almost universally attributed to Gray, to the surprise and indignation of Horace Walpole, who said of his own work, modestly enough, that people must be fools indeed to think such a trifle worthy of a genius like Gray. The reputation of the poet as an antiquarian and a lover of romantic antiquity probably led to this mistake. At Cambridge another error prevailed, as Gray announces to Walpole within a week of the publication of the book. "It engages our attention here, makes some of us cry a little, and all in general afraid to go to bed o' nights. We take it for a translation, and should believe it to be a true story if it were not for St. Nicholas." This novel, poor as it is, was a not inconsiderable link in the chain of romantic revival started by Gray.

We have little record of the poet's life during the early months of 1765. In June he was laid up with gout at York, while paying a visit to Mason, and in July went on to drink the waters and walk by the sea at Hartlepool. From this place he sent to Mason some excellent stanzas which have never found their way into his works; they

are supposed to be indited by William Shakespeare in person, and to be a complaint of his sufferings at the hands of his commentators. The poem is in the metre of the *Elegy*, and is a very grave specimen of the mock-heroic style :—

Better to bottom tarts and cheesecakes nice,
Better the roast meat from the fire to save,
Better be twisted into caps for spice,
Than thus be patched and cobbled in one's grave.

What would Gray, and still more what would Shakespeare say to the vapid confusion of opinions which have been laid on the bard's memory during the century that now intervenes between these verses and ourselves ;— a heap of dirt and stones which he must laboriously shovel away who would read the true inscription on the Prophet's tomb? For criticism of the type which has now become so common, for the counting of syllables and weighing of commas, Gray, with all his punctilio and his minute scholarship, had nothing but contempt :—

Much I have borne from cankered critic's spite,
From fumbling baronets, and poets small,
Pert barristers, and parsons nothing bright:--
But what awaits me now is worst of all.

Mason at last, at the age of forty, had fallen in love with a lady of small fortune and less personal appearance, but very sweet manners ; and while Gray was still lingering in the North his friend married. Meantime Gray passed on to Old Park, and spent the month of August with the Whartons. From this place he went to stay with Lord Strathmore at Hetton, in Durham, and towards the beginning of September set out with his host and Major Lyon,

his brother, for Scotland. The first night was passed at Tweedmouth, and the second at Edinburgh ("that most picturesque at a distance, and nastiest when near, of all capital cities"). Gray was instantly received with honour by the Scotch literati. On the evening of his arrival he supped with Dr. W. Robertson and other leading men of letters. Next day the party crossed the Forth in Lord Strathmore's yawl, and reached Perth, and by dinner-time on the fourth day arrived at Glamis. Here Gray was extremely happy for some bright weeks, charmed with the beauty of the scenery and the novelty of the life, soothed and delighted by the refined hospitality of the Lyons, three of whom, including Lord Strathmore, he had known as undergraduates at Cambridge, and enchanted to hear spoken and sung on all sides of him the magical language of Ossian. On the 11th of September Lord Strathmore took him for a tour of five days in the Highlands, showed him Dunkeld, Taymouth, and the falls of Tummell, the Pass of Killiecrankie, Blair-Athol and the peaks of the Grampians; "in short," he says, "since I saw the Alps, I have seen nothing sublime till now."

Immediately on his arrival at Glamis, he had received an exceedingly polite letter from the poet Beattie, who was a professor at Aberdeen, pressing him to visit that city, and requesting, that, if this was impossible, he himself might be allowed to travel southward to Glamis, to present his compliments to Gray. At the same time the University of Aberdeen offered him the degree of doctor of laws. Gray declined both the invitation and the honour, but said that Lord Strathmore would be very glad to see Beattie at Glamis. The younger poet accordingly posted to lay his enthusiasm at the feet of the elder, and Gray received him with unwonted openness and a sort of intimate candour rare with him.

Beattie reports, among other things, that Dryden was mentioned by him with scant respect, upon which Gray remarked "that if there was any excellence in his own numbers, he had learned it wholly from that great poet. And pressed him with great earnestness to study him, as his choice of words and versification were singularly happy and harmonious."

Gray came back from the mountains with feelings far other than those in which Dr. Johnson indulged when he found himself safe once more in the latitude of Fleet Street. "I am returned from Scotland," says the poet, "charmed with my expedition ; it is of the Highlands I speak ; the Lowlands are worth seeing once, but the mountains are ecstatic, and ought to be visited in pilgrimage once a year. None but these monstrous children of God know how to join so much beauty with so much horror. A fig for your poets, painters, gardeners and clergymen, that have not been among them ; their imagination can be made up of nothing but bowling-greens, flowering shrubs, horse-ponds, Fleet-ditches, shell-grottoes, and Chinese rails. Then I had so beautiful an autumn, Italy could hardly produce a nobler scene, and this so sweetly contrasted with that perfection of nastiness, and total want of accommodation, that Scotland can only supply."

Mason had married on the 25th of September, and greatly desired that Gray, when passing southward towards the end of October, should come and be the witness of his felicity at Aston, but Gray excused himself on the grounds that his funds were exhausted, and went straight through to London. There he found his old friend Harriet Speed, now Madame de la Peyrière, whose husband was in the Italian diplomatic service. She was exceedingly glad to receive him, and welcomed him with two little dogs on

her lap, a cockatoo on her shoulder, a piping bullfinch at her elbow, and a strong suspicion of rouge on her cheeks. For about six months after the tour in Scotland Gray enjoyed very tolerable health, remaining however entirely indolent as far as literature was concerned. When Walpole told him he ought to write more, he replied:—
“What has one to do, when turned of fifty, but really to think of finishing? However, I will be candid, for you seem to be so with me, and avow to you, that till fourscore and upwards, whenever the humour takes me, I will write; because I like it, and because I like myself better when I do so. If I do not write much it is because I cannot.”

Henceforward the chief events in Gray's life were his summer holidays. In May and June, 1766, he paid a visit to the friend whom he called Reverend Billy, the Rev. William Robinson, younger brother of the famous Mrs. Montagu. This gentleman was rector of Denton, in the county of Kent, a little quiet valley some eight miles to the east of Canterbury and near the sea. Gray took the opportunity of visiting Margate and Ramsgate, which were just beginning to become resorts for holiday folk. It is related that at the latter place the friends went to inspect the new pier, then lately completed. Somebody said, seeing it forlorn and empty, “What did they make this pier for?” whereupon Gray smartly replied, “For me to walk on,” and proceeded to claim possession of it, by striding along it. He visited the whole coast of Kent, as far as Hythe, in company with Mr. Robinson. The county charmed him: he wrote to Norton Nicholls.—

The country is all a garden, gay, rich, and fruitful, and from the rainy season had preserved, till I left it, all that emerald verdure, which commonly one only sees for the first fortnight of the spring. In the west part of it from every eminence the eye

catches some long winding reach of the Thames or Medway, with all their navigation ; in the east, the sea breaks in upon you, and mixes its white transient sails and glittering blue expanse with the deeper and brighter greens of the woods and the corn. This last sentence is so fine, I am quite ashamed ; but, no matter ! you must translate it into prose. Palgrave, if he heard it, would cover his face with his pudding sleeve.

He read the *New Bath Guide*, which had just appeared, and was tempted to indulge in satire of a different sort, by the neighbourhood of the Formian villa built by the late Lord Holland at Kingsgate. These powerful verses were found in a drawer at Denton after Gray had left :—

Old, and abandoned by each venal friend,
Here Holland formed the pious resolution,
To smuggle a few years and try to mend
A broken character and constitution.

On this congenial spot he fixed his choice :
Earl Goodwin trembled for his neighbouring sand ;
Here sea-gulls scream, and cormorants rejoice,
And mariners, though shipwrecked, dread to land.

Here reign the blustering North and blighting East,
No tree is heard to whisper, bird to sing ;
Yet Nature could not furnish out the feast,
Art he invokes new horrors still to bring

Here mouldering fanes and battlements arise,
Turrets and arches nodding to their fall,
Unpeopled monastries delude our eyes,
And mimic desolation covers all.

“ Ah ! ” said the sighing peer, “ had Bute been true,
Nor Mungo’s, Rigby’s, Bradshaw’s friendship vain,
Far better scenes than these had blest our view,
And realized the beauties which we feign :

Purged by the sword, and purified by fire,
Then had we seen proud London's hated walls,
Owls might have hooted in St. Peter's choir,
And foxes stunk and littered in St. Paul's.

In November 1766 Mason came to visit Gray in his lodgings in Jermyn Street and brought his wife, "a pretty, modest, innocent, interesting figure, looking like eighteen, though she is near twenty eight." She was far gone in consumption, but preserved a muscular strength and constitutional energy which deceived those who surrounded her. The winter of 1766 tried her endurance very severely, and she gradually sank. On the 27th of March, 1767, after a married life of only eighteen months, she expired in Mason's arms, at Bristol. Gray's correspondence through the three months which preceded her and displays a constant and lively concern, which reached its climax in the exquisite letter which he wrote to Mason the day after her death, before the fatal news had reached him. In the whole correspondence of a man whose unaffected sympathy was always at the service of his friends, there is no expression of it more touching than this:—

March 28, 1767.

MY DEAR MASON,—I break in upon you at a moment when we least of all are permitted to disturb our friends, only to say that you are daily and hourly present to my thoughts. If the worst be not yet past, you will neglect and pardon me; but if the last struggle be over, if the poor object of your long anxieties be no longer sensible to your kindness or to her own sufferings, allow me (at least in idea, for what could I do were I present more than this) to sit by you in silence, and pity from my heart, not her who is at rest, but you who lose her. May He who made us, the Master of our pleasures and our pains, preserve and support you. Adieu! I have long understood how little you had to hope.

About a month earlier than this, at the very early age of thirty-six, an old acquaintance and quondam college friend of Gray's, Frederic Hervey, was presented to the diocese of Cloyne. This was a startling rise in life to a ne'er-do-weel of good family, who had not six years before been begging Mason and Gray to help him, and who soon after this became, not merely Bishop of Derry, but Earl of Bristol. Gray saw a good deal of him during the summer of 1767, and describes how they ate four raspberry puffs together in that historical pastry-cook's at the corner of Cranbourne Street, and how jolly Hervey was at finding himself a bishop. Gray's summer holiday in 1767 was again spent among the mountains. In June he went down to Aston to console Mason, and with him visited Dovedale and the wonders of the Peak; early in July Gray set out by York to stay with Wharton at Old Park, from which in August he sent back to Beattie the manuscript of *The Minstrel*, which that poet had sent, requesting him to revise it. Gray gave a great deal of attention to this rather worthless production, which has no merit save some smoothness in the use of the Spenserian stanza, and which owed all its character to a clever poem in the same manner, published twenty years earlier, the *Psyche* of Dr. Gloucester Ridley, a poet whose name, perhaps, may yet one day find an apologist. Gray, however, never grudged to expend his critical labour to the advantage of a friend, and pruned the luxuriance of *The Minstrel* with a serious assiduity.

Meanwhile Lord Strathmore was at hand, marrying himself to a great Durham heiress; Gray made a trip to Hartlepool in August, and coming back stayed with the newly-wedded earl and countess at their castle of Gibside, near Ravensworth. On the 29th of August he and Dr. Wharton

set out in a post-chaise by Newcastle and Hexham for the Lakes. On their way to Carlisle they got soaked in the rain, and Wharton was taken so ill with asthma at Keswick, that they returned home to Old Park from Cocker-mouth after hardly a glimpse of the mountains. In the church at Appleby, the epitaph of Anne, Countess of Dorset, amused Gray by its pomposity, and he improvised the following pleasing variation on it :—

Now clean, now hideous, mellow now, now gruff,
She swept, she hiss'd, she ripen'd, and grew rough,
At Brougham, Pendragon, Appleby and Brough.

Mason buried his wife in the Cathedral of Bristol, and on the tablet which bears her name he inscribed a brief elegy which has outlived all the rest of his works, and is still frequently quoted with praise. It runs thus :—

Take, holy earth ! all that my soul holds dear :
Take that best gift which Heaven so lately gave :
To Bristol's fount I bore with trembling care
Her faded form : she bow'd to taste the wave,
And died. Does Youth, does Beauty, read the line ?
Does sympathetic fear their breasts alarm ?
Speak, dead Marv ! breathe a strain divine.
E'en from the grave thou shalt have power to charm.
Bid them be chaste, be innocent like thee ;
Bid them in Duty's sphere as meekly move ;
And if so fair, from vanity as free,
As firm in friendship, and as fond in love,
Tell them, though 'tis an awful thing to die,
('Twas ev'n to thee) yet the dread path once trod,
Heaven lifts its everlasting portals high,
And bids the pure in heart behold their God.

The last four lines have the ring of genuine poetry, and surpass the rest of Mason's productions in verse as gold surpasses dross. It is a very curious thing that he does,

in fact, owe his position as a poet to some lines which he did not write himself. As long as he lived, and for many years after his death, the secret was kept, but at last Norton Nicholls confessed that the beautiful quatrain in italics was entirely composed by Gray. Nicholls was with the elder poet at the time when the MS. arrived, and Gray showed it to him, with Mason's last four lines erased. Gray said, "That will never do for an ending; I have altered it thus," and thereupon wrote in the stanza as we now know it. Nicholls says that Mason's finale was weak, with a languid repetition of some preceding expressions; and he took the occasion to criticize the whole of Mason's poetry as feeble and tame. "No wonder," said Gray, "for Mason never gives himself time to think. If his epithets do not occur readily, he leaves spaces for them, and puts them in afterwards. Mason has read too little and written too much." It is well that we should have this side of the question stated, for Mason loves to insinuate that Gray thought him a poet of superlative merit. There was no love lost between Mason and Nicholls, and if the younger carefully preserved Gray's verdict on the poetry of the elder, Mason revenged himself by remarking that it was a good thing for Nicholls that Gray never discovered that he drank like a fish. We are reminded of the wars of Bozzy and Piozzi.

In the spring of 1767 Gray met Dodsley, son of the great publisher and heir to his business, and was asked by him to consent to the republication of his poems in a cheap form. It was found that Bentley's designs were worn out, and therefore it was determined to omit all illustrations, and with them the *Long Story*, which Gray thought would now be unintelligible. While this transaction was loitering along, as Gray's business was apt to

loiter, Beattie wrote to him, in December 1767, to say that Foulis, an enterprising Glasgow publisher, was anxious to produce the same collection. Dodsley made no objection, and so exactly the same matter was put through two presses at the same time. In neither book had Gray any pecuniary interest. There had been no explanatory notes in the *Odes* of 1757, but in reprinting these poems eleven years later, he added a few "out of spite, because the public did not understand the two odes which I called Pindaric, though the first was not very dark, and the second alluded to a few common facts to be found in any sixpenny history of England, by way of question and answer, for the use of children." He added to what had already appeared in 1753 and 1757, the three short archaic romances, lest, as he said to Horace Walpole, "my *works* should be mistaken for the works of a flea, or a pismire. . . . With all this I shall be but a shrimp of an author." The book, as a matter of fact, had to be eked out with blank leaves and very wide type to reach the sum of 120 nominal pages. Dodsley's edition was not a beautiful volume, but it was cheap: it appeared in July 1768, and before October of the same year two impressions consisting of 2250 copies, had been sold. Foulis came out with his far more handsome Glasgow edition in September, and this also, though a costly book, of which a very large number of copies had been struck off, was sold out by the summer of 1769, when Foulis made Gray, who refused money, a very handsome present of books. During the last years of his life, then, Gray was not only beyond dispute the greatest living English poet, but recognized as being such by the public itself.

To the riotous living of his great enemy, Lord Sandwich, Gray owed the preferment which raised him above

all fear of poverty, or even of temporary pressure of means during the last three years of his life. On Sunday, the 24th of July, 1768, Professor Lawrence Brockett, who had been dining with the earl at Hinchinbroke, in Huntingdonshire, while riding back to Cambridge, being very drunk, fell off his horse and broke his neck. The chair of Modern Literature and Modern Languages, with its 400*l.* a year, was one of the most valuable sinecures in the University. Gray was up in London at the time, but his cousin Miss Dolly Antrobus, for whom he had obtained the office of post-mistress at Cambridge, instantly wrote up to town to tell him. He did not stir in the matter. With an admirable briskness, five obscure dons immediately put themselves forward as candidates, and so little did Gray expect to receive the place, that he used his influence for the only man among them who had any literature in him, Michael Lort the Hellenist. Gray was not, however, to be overlooked any longer, and on the 27th he received a letter from that elegant and enlightened statesman, Augustus, Duke of Grafton, offering the Professorship in terms that were delicately calculated to please and soothe his pride. He was told that he owed his nomination to the whole cabinet council, and his success to the King's particular admiration of his genius; the Duke would not presume to think that the post could be of advantage to Gray, but trusted that he might be induced to do so much credit to the University. The poet accepted at once, on the 28th his warrant was signed, and on the 29th he was summoned to kiss the King's hand. These were days in which George III. was still addicted to polite letters, and Gray's friends were anxious to know the purport of several very gracious speeches which the King was observed to make to him; but Gray was coy,

and would not tell; when he was pressed, he said, with great simplicity, that the room was so hot and he himself so embarrassed, that he really did not quite know what it was the King did say.

The charge has often been brought against Gray that he delivered no lectures from his chair at Cambridge. It is, of course, very unfortunate that he did not, but it should be remembered that there was nothing singular in this. Not one of his predecessors, from the date of the institution of the professorship, had delivered a single lecture; Gray, indeed, was succeeded by a man of great energy, John Symonds, who introduced a variety of reforms at Cambridge, and, among others, reformed his own office by lecturing. The terms of the patent recommended the professor to find a deputy in one branch of his duty, and Gray delegated the teaching of foreign languages to a young Italian, Agostino Isola, of literary tastes, who survived long enough to teach Tuscan to Wordsworth. It is said that Gray took the opportunity of reading the Italian poets again with Isola, who afterwards became an editor of Tasso. The granddaughter of Gray's deputy was that Emma Isola who became the adopted child of Charles and Mary Lamb. One is glad to know that Gray behaved with great liberality to Isola and also to the French teacher at the University, René La Butte. It is pleasant to record that the opportunity to follow the natural dictates of his heart in this and other instances, he owed to the loyalty of his old schoolfellow, Stonehewer, who was the secretary of the Duke of Grafton, and who lost no time in suggesting Gray's name to his chief.

Poor Gray, for ever pursued by fears of conflagration, was actually in great danger of being burned alive in January 1768, when a part of Pembroke Hall, including

Mason's chambers, was totally destroyed by fire. Two Methodists, who had been attending a prayer-meeting in the town, happened to pass very late at night, and gave the alarm. Gray was roused between two and three in the morning by the excellent Stephen Hempstead, with the remark, "Don't be frightened, Sir, but the college is all of a fire!" No great harm was done, but Mason had to be lodged a little lower down the street, opposite Peter-house. After the event of the professorship, Gray found himself unable to escape from many public shows in which he had previously pleaded his obscurity with success. For instance, in August 1768, the University of Cambridge was honoured by a visit from Christian VII, King of Denmark, who had married the sister of George III. To escape from the festivities, Gray went off to New-market, but there, as he says, "fell into the jaws of the King of Denmark," was presented to him by the Vice-chancellor and the Orator, and was brought back to Cambridge by them, captive, in a chaise.

The Duke of Grafton succeeded the Duke of Newcastle as Chancellor of the University of Cambridge in 1768, and Gray, moved by gratitude, though never by expectation, made an offer through Stonehewer that he should write an ode to be performed at the ceremony of installation. He seems to have made the proposal in the last months of the year. In April 1769, he says:—"I do not guess what intelligence Stonehewer gave you about my employments, but the worst employment I have had has been to write something for music against the Duke of Grafton comes to Cambridge. I must comfort myself with the intention, for I know it will bring abuse enough on me: however, it is done, and given to the Vice-Chancellor, and there is an end." Norton Nicholls records that Gray considered the

composition of this *Installation Ode* a sort of task, and set about it with great reluctance; "it was long after he first mentioned it to me before he could prevail with himself to begin the composition. One morning, when I went to him as usual after breakfast, I knocked at his door, which he threw open, and exclaimed with a loud voice,—

'Hence, avaunt! 'tis holy ground!'

I was so astonished, that I almost feared he was out of his senses; but this was the beginning of the Ode which he had just composed." For three months before the event, the music professor, J. Randall, of King's, waited on Gray regularly to set the *Installation Ode* to music. It was Gray's desire to make this latter as much as possible like the refined compositions of the Italian masters that he loved, and Randall did his best to comply with this. Gray took great pains over the score, though in his private letters he spoke with scorn of Randall's music; but when he came to the chorus, Gray remarked, "I have now done, make as much noise as you please!" Dr. Burney, it afterwards turned out, was very much disappointed because he was not asked to set Gray's composition. The *Installation Ode* was performed before a brilliant assembly on July the 1st, 1769, Gray all the while sighing to be far away upon the misty top of Skiddaw. In the midst of all the turmoil and circumstance of the installation he wrote in this way to Norton Nicholls, who had consulted him about the arrangement of his gardens:—

And so you have a garden of your own, and you plant and transplant, and are dirty and amused! Are you not ashamed of yourself? Why, I have no such thing, you monster, nor ever shall be either dirty or amused as long as I live. My

gardens are in the window, like those of a lodger up three pairs of stairs in Petticoat Lane or Camomile Street, and they go to bed regularly under the same roof that I do. Dear, how charming it must be to walk out in one's own *garding*, and sit on a bench in the open air, with a fountain, and a leaden statue, and a rolling stone, and an arbour: have a care of sore throats, though, and the *agoe*.

It cannot be said that the *Installation Ode*, though it contains some beautiful passages, is in Gray's healthiest vein. In it he returns, with excess, to that allegorical style of his youth from which he had almost escaped, and we are told a great deal too much about "painted Flattery" and "creeping Gain," and visionary gentlefolks of that kind. Where he gets free from all this, and especially in that strophe when, after a silence of more than a century, we hear once more the music of Milton's *Nativity Ode*, we find him as charming as ever:—

Ye brown, o'er-arching groves,
That contemplation loves,
Where willowy Camus lingers with delight!
Oft at the blush of dawn
I trod your level lawn,
Oft woo'd the gleam of Cynthia silver-bright
In cloisters dim, far from the haunts of Folly,
With freedom by my side, and soft-eyed Melancholy.

The procession of Cambridge worthies, which Hallam has praised so highly, is drawn with great dignity, and the compliment conveyed in the sixth strophe, where the venerable Margaret Beaufort bends from heaven to salute her descendant, is very finely turned; but we cannot help feeling that the spirit of languor has not completely been excluded from the poem, and that if Gray was not exhausted when he wrote it he was at least greatly fatigued.

The eulogy of the "star of Brunswick" at the close of the Ode is perhaps the only absurd passage in the entire works of Gray. After this he wrote no verse that has been preserved; his faculty seems to have left him entirely, and if we deplore his death within two years of the performance of the *Installation Ode*, it is not without a suspicion that the days of his poetic life were already numbered.

In 1769 Gray sold part of his estate, consisting of houses on the west side of Hand Alley, in the City, for one thousand guineas, and an annuity of eighty pounds for Mrs. Oliffe, who had a share in the estate. "I have also won a twenty-pound prize in the lottery, and Lord knows what arrears I have in the Treasury, and I am a rich fellow enough, go to;" so he writes on the 2nd of January of that year to Norton Nicholls; "and a fellow that hath had losses, and one that hath two gowns, and everything handsome about him; and in a few days I shall have curtains, are you advised of that? ay, and a mattress to lie upon."

One more work remained for Gray to do, and that a considerable one. He was yet to discover and to describe the beauties of the Cumbrian Lakes. In his youth he was the man who first looked on the sublimities of Alpine scenery with pleasure, and in old age he was to be the pioneer of Wordsworth in opening the eyes of Englishmen to the exquisite landscape of Cumberland. The journal of Gray's *Tour in the Lakes* has been preserved in full, and was printed by Mason, who withheld his other itineraries. He started from York, where he had been staying with Mason, in July 1769, and spent the next two months at Old Park. On the 30th of September Gray found himself on the winding road looking westward, and with Appleby and the long reaches of the Eden at his feet. He made no stay, but passed on to Penrith, for the night,

and in the afternoon walked up the Beacon Hill, and saw "through an opening in the bosom of that cluster of mountains the lake of Ulleswater, with the craggy tops of a hundred nameless hills." Next day he ascended the brawling bed of the Eamont, with the towers of Helvellyn before him, until he reached Dunmaller. Gray's description of his first sight of Ulleswater, since sanctified to all lovers of poetry by Wordsworth's *Daffodils*, is worth quoting:—

Walked over a spongy meadow or two, and began to mount this hill through a broad and straight green alley among the trees, and with some toil gained the summit. From hence saw the lake opening directly at my feet, majestic in its calmness, clear and smooth as a blue mirror, with winding shores and low points of land covered with green enclosures, white farm-houses looking out among the trees, and cattle feeding. The water is almost everywhere bordered with cultivated lands gently sloping upwards till they reach the feet of the mountains, which rise very rude and awful with their broken tops on either hand. Directly in front, at better than three miles distance, Place Fell, one of the bravest among them, pushes its bold broad breast into the midst of the lake, and forces it to alter its course, forming first a large bay to the left, and then bending to the right.

It would seem that Wharton had been with his friend during the first part of this excursion, but had been forced, by a violent attack of asthma which came on at Brough, to return home. It is to this circumstance alone that we owe Gray's Journal, which was written piecemeal, and sent by post to Wharton that he might share in what his friend was doing. On the 1st of October Gray slept again at Penrith, and set out early next morning for Keswick. He passed at noon under the gleaming crags of Saddle-

back, the topmost point of which "appeared of a sad purple, from the shadow of the clouds as they sailed slowly by it." Passing by the mystery where Skiddaw shrouded "his double front among Atlantic clouds," Gray proceeded into Keswick, watching the sunlight reflected from the lake on every facet of its mountain-cup.

It seems that Gray walked about everywhere with that pretty toy, the Claude-Lorraine glass, in his hand, making the beautiful forms of the landscape compose in its lustrous chiaroscuro. Arranging his glass, in the afternoon of the 2nd of October, he got a bad fall backwards in a Keswick lane, but happily broke nothing but his knuckles. Next day, in company with the landlord of the Queen's Head, he explored the wonders of Borrowdale, the scene of Wordsworth's wild poem of *Yew Trees*. Just before entering the valley, he pauses to make a little vignette of the scene for Wharton's benefit:—

Our path here tends to the left, and the ground gently rising and covered with a glade of scattering trees and bushes on the very margin of the water, opens both ways the most delicious view, that my eyes ever beheld. Behind you are the magnificent heights of Walla Crag; opposite lie the thick hanging woods of Lord Egremont, and Newland Valley, with green and smiling fields embosomed in the dark cliffs; to the left the jaws of Borrowdale, with that turbulent chaos of mountain behind mountain rolled in confusion; beneath you, and stretching far away to the right, the shining purity of the lake, just ruffled with the breeze, enough to show it is alive, reflecting rocks, woods, fields, and inverted tops of mountains, with the white buildings of Keswick, Crosthwaite Church, and Skiddaw for a back-ground at a distance. Oh! Doctor, I never wished more for you.

All this is much superior in graphic power to what the

Paul Sandbys and Richard Wilsons could at that time attain to in the art of painting. Their best landscapes, with their sobriety and conscious artificiality, their fine tone and studious repression of reality, are more allied to those elegant and conventional descriptions of the picturesque by which William Gilpin made himself so popular twenty years later. Even Smith of Derby, whose engravings of Cumberland scenes had attracted notice, was tamely topographical in his treatment of them. Gray gives us something more modern, yet no less exact, and reminds us more of the early landscapes of Turner, with their unaffected rendering of nature. Southey's early letters from the Lakes, written nearly a generation later than Gray's, though more developed in romantic expression, are not one whit truer or more graphic.

Lodore seems to have been even in those days a sight to which visitors were taken; Gray gives a striking account of it, but confesses that the crags of Gowder were, to his mind, far more impressive than this slender cascade. The piles of shattered rock that hung above the pass of Gowder gave him a sense of danger as well as of sublimity, and reminded him of the Alps. He glanced at the balanced crags, and hurried on, whispering to himself "*non ragionam di lor, ma guarda, e passa!*" The weather was most propitious; if anything, too brilliantly hot; it had suggested itself to Gray that in such clear weather and under such a radiant sky he ought to ascend Skiddaw, but his laziness got the better of him, and he judged himself better employed in sauntering along the shore of Derwentwater:—

In the evening walked alone down to the Lake by the side of Crow Park after sunset, and saw the solemn colouring of light draw on, the last gleam of sunshine fading away on the hill-

tops, the deep serene of the waters, and the long shadows of the mountains thrown across them, till they nearly touched the hithermost shore. At distance heard the murmur of many water-falls, not audible in the day-time. Wished for the Moon, but she was *dark to me and silent, hid in her vacant interlunar cave*

Mr. Matthew Arnold has noticed that Gray has the accent of *Obermann* in such passages as these : it is the full tone of the romantic solitary without any of the hysterical over-gorgeousness which has ruined modern description of landscape. The 4th of October was a day of rest : the traveller contented himself with watching a procession of red clouds come marching up the eastern hills, and with gazing across the waterfall into the gorge of Borrowdale. On the 5th he walked down the Derwent to Bassenthwaite Water, and skirmished a little around the flanks of Skiddaw ; on the 6th he drove along the eastern shore of Bassenthwaite towards Cockermouth, but did not reach that town, and returned to Keswick. The next day, the weather having suddenly become chilly and autumnal, Gray made no excursions, but botanized along the borders of Derwentwater, with the perfume of the wild myrtle in his nostrils. A little touch in writing to Wharton of the weather shows us the neat and fastidious side of Gray's character. "The soil is so thin and light," he says of the neighbourhood of Keswick, "that no day has passed in which I could not walk out with ease, and you know I am no lover of dirt." On the 8th he drove out of Keswick along the Ambleside road ; the wind was easterly and the sky grey, but just as they left the valley, the sun broke out, and bathed the lakes and mountain-sides with such a wonderful morning glory that Gray almost made up his mind to go back again. He was particularly fascinated with the

“clear obscure” of Thirlmere, shaded by the spurs of Helvellyn ; and entering Westmoreland, descended into what Wordsworth was to make classic ground thirty years later, Grasmere,—

Its crags, its woody steeps, its lakes,
Its one green island, and its winding shores,
The multitude of little rocky hills,
Its church, and cottages of mountain stone,
Clustered like stars.

This fragment of Wordsworth may be confronted by Gray's description of the same scene :—

Just beyond Helen Crag, opens one of the sweetest landscapes that art ever attempted to imitate. The bosom of the mountains, spreading here into a broad basin, discovers in the midst Grasmere Water ; its margin is hollowed into small bays with bold eminences, some of them rocks, some of soft turf that half conceal and vary the figure of the little lake they command. From the shore a low promontory pushes itself far into the water, and on it stands a white village with the parish church rising in the midst of it ; hanging enclosures, corn-fields, and meadows green as an emerald, with their trees, hedges, and cattle, fill up the whole space from the edge of the water. Just opposite to you is a large farmhouse at the bottom of a steep smooth lawn embosomed in old woods, which climb half-way up the mountain-side, and discover above them a broken line of crags, that crown the scene. Not a single red tile, no flaring gentleman's house, or garden-walls, break in upon the repose of this little unsuspected paradise ; but all is peace, rusticity, and happy poverty in its neatest and most becoming attire.

Passing from Grasmere, he drove through Rydal, not without a reference to the “large old-fashioned fabric, now a farm-house,” which Wordsworth was to buy in 1813, and was to immortalize with his memory. I have not been

able to find any word in the writings of the younger poet to show his consciousness of the fact that Gray's eye was attracted to the situation of Rydal Mount exactly six months before he himself saw the light at Cockermouth. At Ambleside, then quite unprepared for the accommodation of strangers, Gray could find no decent bed, and so went on to Kendal, for the first few miles skirting the broad waters of Windermere, magnificent in the soft light of afternoon. He spent two nights at Kendal, drove round Morecambe Bay and slept at Lancaster on the 10th; reached Settle, under the "long black cloud of Ingleborough," on the 12th; and we find him still wandering among the wild western moors of Yorkshire when the journal abruptly closes on the 15th of October. On the 18th he was once more at Aston with Mason, and he returned to Cambridge on the 22nd, after a holiday of rather more than three months.

CHAPTER IX.

BONSTETTEN—DEATH.

GRAY became, in the last years of his life, an object of some curiosity at Cambridge. He was difficult of access, except to his personal friends. It was the general habit to dine in college at noon, so that the students might flock, without danger of indigestion, to the philosophical disputations at two o'clock. The fellows dined together in the Parlour, or the "Combination" as the common-room came to be called; and even when they dined in hall, they were accustomed to meet, in the course of the morning, over a seed-cake and a bottle of sherry-sack. But Gray kept aloof from these convivialities, at which indeed, as not being a fellow, he was not obliged to be present; and his dinner was served to him, by his man, in his own rooms. In the same way, when he was in town, at his lodgings in Jermyn Street, his meals were brought in to him from an eating-house round the corner. Almost the only time at which strangers could be sure of seeing him was when he went to the Rainbow coffee-house, at Cambridge, to order his books from the circulating library. The registers were kept by the woman at the bar, and no book was bought unless the requisition for it was signed by four subscribers. Towards the end of Gray's life, literary tuft-hunters used to contend for the

honour of supporting Gray's requests for books. There was in particular a Mr. Pigott who desired to be thought the friend of the poet, and who went so far as to erase the next subscriber's name, and place his own underneath the neat "T. Gray." It happened that Gray objected very much to this particular gentleman, and he remarked one day to his friend Mr. Sparrow, "That man's name wherever I go, *pigot*, he *Pigott's* me!" It is said that when Gray emerged from his chambers, graduates would hastily leave their dinners to look at him, but we may doubt, with Mr. Leslie Stephen, whether this is within the bounds of probability; Mathias, however, who would certainly have left his dinner, was a whole year at Cambridge without being able to set eyes on Gray once. Lord St. Helen's told Rogers that when he was at St. John's in 1770, he called on Gray with a letter of introduction, and that Gray returned the call, which was thought so extraordinary, that a considerable number of college men assembled in the quadrangle to see him pass, and all removed their caps when he went by. He brought three young dons with him, and the procession walked in Indian file; his companions seem to have attended in silence, and to have expressed dismay on their countenances when Lord St. Helen's frankly asked the poet what he thought of Garrick's *Jubilee Ode*,—which was just published. Gray replied that he was easily pleased.

Unaffected to the extreme with his particular friends, Gray seems to have adopted with strangers whom he did not like, a supercilious air, and a tone of great languor and hauteur. Cole, who did not appreciate him, speaks, in an unpublished note, of his "disgusting effeminacy," by which he means what we call affectation. Mason says that he used this manner as a

means of offence and defence towards persons whom he disliked. Here is a picture of him the year before he died: "Mr. Gray's singular niceness in the choice of his acquaintance makes him appear fastidious in a great degree to all who are not acquainted with his manner. He is of a fastidious and recluse distance of carriage, rather averse to all sociability, but of the graver turn, nice and elegant in his person, dress, and behaviour, even to a degree of finicality and effeminacy." This conception of him as an affected and effeminate little personage was widely current during his own lifetime. Mr. Penneck, the Superintendent of the Museum Reading-Room, had a friend who travelled one day in the Windsor stage with a small gentleman to whom, on passing Kensington Churchyard, he began to quote with great fervour some stanzas of the *Elegy*; adding how extraordinary it was that a poet of such genius and manly vigour of mind, should be a delicate, timid, effeminate character, "in fact, sir," he continued, "that Mr. Gray, who wrote those noble verses, should be a puny insect shivering at a breeze." The other gentleman assented, and they passed to general topics, on which he proved himself to be so well-informed, entertaining, and vivacious, that Penneck's friend was enchanted. On leaving the coach, he fell into an enthusiastic description of his fellow-traveller to the friend who met him, and wound up by saying, "Ah! here he is, returning to the coach! Who *can* he be?" "Oh! that is Mr. Gray, the poet!"

Gray could be talkative enough in general society, if he found the company sympathetic. Walpole says that he resembled Hume as a talker, but was much better company. On one of his visits to Norton Nicholls at Blundeston, he found two old relatives of his host, people of the

most commonplace type, already installed, and at first he seemed to consider it impossible to reconcile himself to their presence. But noticing that Nicholls was grieved at this, he immediately changed his manner, and made himself so agreeable to them both that the old people talked of him with pleasure as long as they lived. He would always interest himself in any reference to farming, or to the condition of the crops, which bore upon his botanical pursuits; one of his daily occupations, in his healthier years, being the construction of a botanical calendar. One of his finest sayings was:—"To be employed is to be happy;" and his great personal aim in life seems to have been to be constantly employed, without fatigue, so as to be able to stem the tide of constitutional low spirits. The presence of his most intimate friends, such as Wharton and Nicholls, had so magnetic an influence upon him, that their memory of him was almost uniformly bright and vivid. Those whom he loved less, knew how dejected and silent he could be for hours and hours. Gibbon regretted the pertinacity with which Gray plunged into merely acquisitive and scholastic study; the truth probably is, that he had not the courage to indulge in reverie, nor the physical health to be at rest.

The person, however, who has preserved the most exact account of Gray's manner of life during the last months of his career, is Bonstetten. In November 1769 Norton Nicholls, being at Bath, met in the Pump-Room there, among the mob of fashionable people, a handsome young Swiss gentleman of four-and-twenty, named Charles Victor de Bonstetten. He was the only son of the treasurer of Berne, and belonged to one of the six leading families of the country. He lived at Nyon, had been educated at Lausanne, and was now in England, desiring to study our

language and literature, but having hitherto fallen more among fashionable people than people of taste. He was very enthusiastic, romantic, and good-looking, very sweet and winning in manner, full of wit and spirit, and, when he chose to exert himself, quite irresistible. He had brought an introduction to Pitt, but, after receiving some courtesies, had slipped away into the country, and Nicholls found him turning the heads of all the young ladies at Bath. Bonstetten attached himself very warmly to Nicholls, and was persuaded by the latter to go to Cambridge to attend lectures. That Nicholls thoroughly admired him, is certain from the very earnest letter of introduction which he sent with him to Gray on the 27th of November, 1769.

The ebullient young Swiss conquered the shy and solitary poet at sight. "My gaiety, my love for English poetry, appeared to have subdued him,"—the word Bonstetten uses is "subjugué,"—"and the difference in age between us seemed to disappear at once." Gray found him a lodging close to Pembroke Hall, at a coffee-house, and at once set himself to plan out for Bonstetten a course of studies. On the 6th of January, 1770, Bonstetten wrote to Norton Nicholls:—"I am in a hurry from morning till night. At eight o'clock I am roused by a young square-cap, with whom I follow Satan through chaos and night. . . We finish our travels in a copious breakfast of muffins and tea. Then appear Shakespeare and old Linnæus, struggling together as two ghosts would do for a damned soul. Sometimes the one gets the better, sometimes the other. Mr. Gray, whose acquaintance is my greatest debt to you, is so good as to show me Macbeth, and all witches, beldames, ghosts and spirits, whose language I never could have understood without his

interpretation. I am now endeavouring to dress all these people in a French dress, which is a very hard labour." In enclosing this letter to Nicholls, Gray adds as a post-script:—

I never saw such a boy; our breed is not made on this model. He is busy from morning to night, has no other amusement than that of changing one study for another, likes nobody that he sees here, and yet wishes to stay longer, though he has passed a whole fortnight with us already. His letter has had no correction whatever, and is prettier by half than English.

For more than ten weeks after the date of this letter, Bonstetten remained in his lodgings at Cambridge, in daily and unbroken intercourse with Gray. The reminiscences of the young Swiss gentleman are extremely interesting, though doubtless they require to be accepted with a certain reservation. There is however the stamp of truth about his statement that the poetical genius of Gray was by this time so completely extinguished that the very mention of his poems was distasteful to him. He would not permit Bonstetten to talk to him about them, and when the young man quoted some of his lines, Gray preserved an obstinate silence like a sullen child. Sometimes Bonstetten said, "Will you not answer me?" But no word would proceed from the shut lips. Yet this was during the time when, on all subjects but himself, Gray was conversing with Bonstetten on terms of the most affectionate intimacy. For three months the young Swiss, despising all other society to be found at Cambridge, spent every evening with Gray, arriving at five o'clock, and lingering till midnight. They read together Shakespeare, Milton, Dryden and the other great English classics, until their study would slip into sympathetic conversation, in

which the last word was never spoken. Bonstetten poured out his confidences to the old poet,—all his life, all his hopes, all the aspirations and enthusiasms of his youth, and Gray received it all with profound interest and sympathy, but never with the least reciprocity. To the last his own life's history was a closed book to Bonstetten. Never once did he speak of himself. Between the present and past there seemed to be a great gulf fixed, and when the warm-hearted young man approached the subject, he was always baffled. He remarks that there was a complete discord between Gray's humorous intellect and ardent imagination on the one side and what he calls a "*misère de cœur*" on the other. Bonstetten thought that this was owing to a suppressed sensibility, to the fact that Gray never—

anywhere in the sun or rain
Had loved or been beloved again,

and that he felt his heart to be frozen at last under what Bonstetten calls the Arctic Pole of Cambridge.

This final friendship of his life troubled the poet strangely. He could not get over the wonder of Bonstetten's ardour and vitality: "our breed is not made on this model." His letters to Norton Nicholls are like the letters of an anxious parent. "He gives me," he says on the 20th of March, 1770, "too much pleasure, and at least an equal share of inquietude. You do not understand him as well as I do, but I leave my meaning imperfect, till we meet. I have never met with so extraordinary a person. God bless him! I am unable to talk to you about anything else, I think." Late in the month of March, Bonstetten tore himself away from Cambridge; his father had long been insisting that he must return to Nyon. Gray went up to London with him, showed him some of the sights,

among others Dr. Samuel Johnson, who came puffing down the Strand, unconscious of the two strangers who paused on their way to observe him. "Look, look, Bonstetten!" said Gray, "the great Bear! There goes *Ursa Major*!" On the 23rd of March Gray lent him 20*l.* and packed his friend into the Dover machine at four o'clock in the morning, returning very sadly to Cambridge, whence he wrote to Nicholls:—"Here am I again to pass my solitary evenings, which hung much lighter on my hands before I knew him. This is your fault! Pray let the next you send me be halt and blind, dull, unapprehensive and wrong-headed. For this—as Lady Constance says—was ever such a gracious creature born! and yet—but no matter! This place never appeared so horrible to me as it does now. Could you not come for a week or a fortnight? It would be sunshine to me in a dark night."

Bonstetten had departed with every vow and circumstance of friendship, and had obliged Gray to promise that he would visit him the next summer in Switzerland. He wrote to Gray from Abbeville, and then there fell upon his correspondence one of those silences so easy to the volatile and youthful. Gray in the meanwhile was possessed by a weak restlessness of mind that made him almost ill, and early in April, since Nicholls could not come to Cambridge, he himself hastened to Blundeston, spending a few days with Palgrave ("Old Pa") on the way. He made one excuse after another for avoiding Cambridge, to which he did not return, except for a week or two, until the end of the year. He agreed with Norton Nicholls that they should go together to Switzerland in the summer of 1771, but entreated him not to vex him by referring to this in any way till the time came for starting. By and by letters

came from Bonstetten, with "bad excuses for not writing oftener," and in May Gray was happier, travelling to Aston to be with Mason, driving along the roads with trees blooming and nightingales singing all around him.

His only literary exercise during this year 1770 seems to have been filling an interleaved copy of the works of Linnaeus with notes. For the last eight or nine years natural history had been his favourite study; he said that it was a singular felicity to him to be engaged in this pursuit, and it often took him out into the fields when nothing else would. He interleaved a copy of Hudson's *Flora Anglica*, and filled it with notes: and was on a level with all that had been done up to his time in zoology and botany. Some of his notes and observations were afterwards made use of by Pennant, with warm acknowledgment. He returned from Aston towards the end of June, and prepared at once to start with Norton Nicholls for a summer tour. He directed Nicholls to meet him at the sign of the Wheat Sheaf, five miles beyond Huntingdon, about the 3rd of July. Unfortunately there exists no journal to commemorate this, the last of Gray's tours, which seems to have occupied more than two months. The friends drove across the midland counties into Worcestershire, descended the Severn to Gloucester, and then made their way to Malvern Wells, where they stayed a week, because Nicholls found some of his acquaintance there. Gray must have been particularly well, for he ascended the Herefordshire Beacon, and enjoyed the unrivalled view from its summit. He was much vexed, however, with the fashionable society at the long table of the inn, and maintained silence at dinner. When Nicholls gently rallied him on this, he said that long retirement in the university had destroyed

the versatility of his mind. At Malvern he received a copy of Goldsmith's *Deserted Village*, which had just been published; he asked Norton Nicholls to read it aloud to him, listened to it with fixed attention, and exclaimed before they had proceeded far, "This man is a poet." From Malvern they went on to Ross in Herefordshire, and descended the Wye to Chepstow, a distance of forty miles, in a boat, "surrounded," says Gray, "with ever new delights." From this point they went on to Abergavenny and South Wales, returning by Oxford, where they spent two agreeable days. During this tour Gray turned aside to visit Leasowes, where Shenstone had lived and died in 1763. Gray had never admired Shenstone's artificial grace, and had been vexed by some allusions in his posthumously published letters, and it was probably more to see the famous "Arcadian greens rural" than to do homage to a poetic memory that he loitered at Halesowen. He returned in a very fair state of health, as was customary after his summer holidays; but the good effects unfortunately passed away unusually soon. He had a feverish attack in September, but cured it with sage-tea, his favourite nostrum. Nicholls came up to town to see him, and travelled with him as far as Cambridge; but Gray's now invincible dislike to this place seems to have made him really ill, and for the next two months he only went outside the walls of the college once. His aunt, Mrs. Oliffe, now ninety years of age, had come up to Cambridge, and appears to have lodged close to Gray inside Pembroke College, where he was now allowed to do whatever he chose. She was helplessly bedridden, but as intractable a daughter of the Dragon of Wantley as ever. The other Pembroke nonogenarian, Dr. Roger Long, died on the 16th of December 1770, and Gray's friend James Brown suc-

ceeded him in the Mastership without any contention.

Early in 1771, Mrs. Oliffe died, leaving her entire fortune, such as it was, to Gray, and none of it to her nieces the Antrobuses, who had nursed her in her illness. These women had been brought to Cambridge by Gray, and had been so comfortably settled by him in situations, that in one of his letters he playfully dreads that all his friends will shudder at the name of Antrobus. All through this spring Gray seems to have been gradually sinking in strength and spirits, though none of his friends appear to have been alarmed about it. To Norton Nicholls' entreaties that he would go to visit Bonstetten with him, as to the young Swiss gentleman's own invitations, he answered with a sad intimation that his health was not equal to so much exertion.

Nicholls came up to town to say farewell to him in the middle of June, having at last been persuaded that it was useless to wait for Gray. The poet was in his old rooms in Jermyn Street and there they parted for the last time. Before Nicholls took leave of him, Gray said, very earnestly, "I have one thing to beg of you, which you must not refuse." Nicholls replied, "You know you have only to command; what is it?" "Do not go to visit Voltaire; no one knows the mischief that man will do." Nicholls said, "Certainly I will not; but what could a visit from me signify?" "Every tribute to such a man signifies." A little before this Gray had rejected polite overtures from Voltaire, who was a great admirer of the *Elegy*; but it was not that he was dead to the charms of the great Frenchman. He paid a full tribute of admiration to his genius, delighted in his wit, enjoyed his histories, and regarded his tragedies as next in rank

to those of Shakespeare ; but he hated him, as he hated Hume, because, as he said, he thought him an enemy to religion. He tried to persuade himself that Beattie had mastered Voltaire in argument. Gray had a similar dislike to Shaftesbury, and was, throughout his career, though in a very unassuming way, a sincere believer in Christianity. We find him exhorting Dr. Wharton not to omit the use of family prayer, and this although he had a horror of anything like "methodism" or religious display.

Gray's last letter to Bonstetten may be given as an example of his correspondence with that gentleman, as long after preserved and published by Miss Plumptre :—

I am returned, my dear Bonstetten, from the little journey I made into Suffolk, without answering the end proposed. The thought that you might have been with me there, has embittered all my hours. Your letter has made me happy, as happy as so gloomy, so solitary a being as I am, is capable of being made. I know, and have too often felt, the disadvantages I lay myself under ; how much I hurt the little interest I have in you by this air of sadness so contrary to your nature and present enjoyments, but sure you will forgive, though you cannot sympathize with me. It is impossible with me to dissemble with you ; such as I am I expose my heart to your view, nor wish to conceal a single thought from your penetrating eyes. All that you say to me, especially on the subject of Switzerland, is infinitely acceptable. It feels too pleasing ever to be fulfilled, and as often as I read over your truly kind letter, written long since from London, I stop at these words : "*La mort qui peut glacer nos bras avant qu'ils soient entrelacés.*"

He made a struggle to release himself from this morbid mood. He reflected on the business which he had so long neglected, and determined to try again to find energy to lecture. He drew up three schemes for regu-

lating the studies of private pupils, and laid them before the Duke of Grafton. But these plans, as was usual with Gray, never came to execution, and when he was at Aston in 1770, he told Mason that he had come to the conclusion that it was his duty to resign the professorship, since it was out of his power to do any real service in it. Mason strongly dissuaded him from such a step, and encouraged him to think that even yet he would be able to make a beginning of his lectures. The Exordium of his proposed inauguration speech was all that was found at his death to account for so many efforts and intentions.

In the latter part of May 1771 Gray went up to London, to his lodgings in Jermyn Street, where, as has been already mentioned, he received the farewell visit from Nicholls. He was profoundly wretched; writing to Wharton he said, "Till this year I hardly knew what mechanical low spirits were: but now I even tremble at an East wind." His cough was incurable, the neuralgic pains in his head were chronic. William Robinson, in describing his last interview with him, said that Gray talked of his own career as a poet, lamented that he had done so little, and began at last, in a repining tone, to complain that he had lost his health just when he had become easy in his circumstances; but on that he checked himself, saying that it was wrong to rail against Providence. As he grew worse and worse, he placed himself under a physician, Dr. Gisborne, who ordered him to leave Bloomsbury, and try a clearer air at Kensington. Probably the last call he ever paid was on Walpole; for hearing that his old friend was about to set out for Paris, Gray visited him. "He complained of being ill," says Walpole, "and talked of the gout in his stomach, but I expected his death no more than my own." During the month of June he

received the MS. of Gilpin's *Tour down the Wye*, and enriched this work, which was not published until 1782, with his notes, being reminiscences of his journey of the preceding year.

On the 22nd of July, finding himself alone in London, and overwhelmed with dejection and the shadow of death, he came back to Cambridge. It was his intention to rest there a day or two, and then to proceed to Old Park, where the Whartons were ready to receive him. He put himself under the treatment of his physician, Dr. Robert Glynn, who had been the author of a successful Seatonian poem, and who dabbled in literature. This Dr. Glynn was conspicuous for his gold-headed cane, scarlet coat, three-cornered hat, and resounding pattens for thirty years after Gray's death, and retains a niche in local history as the last functionary of the University who was buried by torchlight. Dr. Glynn was not at all anxious about Gray's condition, but on Wednesday the 24th, the poet was so languid, that his friend James Brown wrote for him to Dr. Wharton, to warn him that though Gray did not give over the hopes of taking his journey to Old Park, he was very low and feverish, and could hardly start immediately. That very night, while at dinner in the College Hall at Pembroke, Gray felt a sudden nausea, which obliged him to go hurriedly to his own room. He lay down, but he became so violently and constantly sick, that he sent his servant to fetch in Dr. Glynn, who was puzzled at the symptoms, but believed that there was no cause for alarm. Gray grew worse, however, for the gout had reached the stomach; Dr. Glynn became alarmed, and sent for Russell Plumptre, the Regius Professor of Physic. The old doctor was in bed, and refused to get up, for which he was afterwards severely blamed. No skill, however, could have

saved Gray. He got through the 25th pretty well, and slept tolerably that night, but after taking some asses'-milk on the morning of the 26th, the spasms in the stomach returned again. Dr. Brown scarcely left him after the first attack, and wrote to all his principal friends from the side of his bed. On this day, Thursday, the Master could still hope "that we shall see him well again in a short time." On Sunday, the 29th, Gray was taken with a strong convulsive fit, and these recurred until he died. He retained his senses almost to the last. Stonehewer and Dr. Gisborne arrived from London on the 30th and took leave of their dying friend. His language became less and less coherent, and he was not clearly able to explain to Brown, without a great effort, where his will would be found. He seemed perfectly sensible of his condition, but expressed no concern at the thought of leaving the world. Towards the end he did not suffer at all, but lay in a sort of torpor, out of which he woke to call for his niece, Miss Mary Antrobus. She took his hand, and he said to her, in a clear voice, "Molly, I shall die!" He lay quietly after this, without attempting to speak, and ceased to breathe about eleven o'clock, an hour before midnight on the 30th of July, 1771, aged fifty-four years, seven months, and four days.

James Brown found, in the spot which Gray had indicated, his will. It was dated July 2, 1770, and must therefore have been drawn up just before he started on his tour through the Western Counties. Mason and Brown were named his executors. He left his property divided among a great number of relations and friends, reserving the largest portions for his niece Miss Mary Antrobus, and her sister, Mrs. Dorothy Comyns, both of whom were residents at Cambridge, and who had probably looked to his

comfort of late years as he had considered their prospects in earlier life. The faithful Stephen Hempstead was not forgotten, while Mason and Brown were left residuary legatees. On Brown fell the whole burden of attending to the funeral, for Mason could not be found; he had taken a holiday, and knew nothing of the whole matter until his letters reached him, in a cluster, at Bridlington Quay, about the 7th of August.

By this time Gray was buried; Brown took the body, in a coffin of seasoned oak, to London and thence to Stoke, where, on the 6th of August, it was deposited in the vault which contained that of Gray's mother. The mourners were Miss Antrobus, her sister's husband, Mr. Comyns, a shopkeeper at Cambridge, "a young gentleman of Christ's College, with whom Mr. Gray was very intimate," and Brown himself; these persons followed the hearse in a mourning coach. The sum of ten pounds was, at the poet's express wish, distributed among certain "honest and industrious poor persons in the parish" of Stoke Pogis. As soon as Mason heard the news, he crossed the Humber, and reached Cambridge the next day; Brown was a very cautious and punctilious man, and no sooner had he returned to Cambridge than he insisted that Mason should go up to town with him and prove the will. Mason, who throughout showed a characteristic callousness, grumbled but agreed, and on the 12th of August the will was proved in London.

The executors returned immediately to Cambridge, delivered up the plate, jewellery, linen, and furniture to the Antrobuses, and then Mason packed up the books and papers to be removed to his rooms at York. Once settled there, on the 18th, he began to enjoy the luxury of a literary bereavement. "Come,"

he says to Dr. Wharton, "come, I beseech you, and condole with me on our mutual, our irreparable loss. The great charge which his dear friendship has laid upon me, I feel myself unable to execute, without the advice and assistance of his best friends; you are among the first of these." It will hardly be believed that the "great charge" so pompously referred to here is contained in these exceedingly simple words of Gray:—"I give to the Reverend William Mason, precentor of York, all my books, manuscripts, coins, music printed or written, and papers of all kinds, to preserve or destroy at his own discretion." There is no shadow of doubt that the ambitious and worldly Mason saw here an opportunity of achieving a great literary success, and that he lost no time in posing as Gray's representative and confidant. A few people resisted his pretensions, such as Robinson and Nicholls, but they were not writers, and Mason revenged himself by ignoring them. Nor did he take the slightest notice of Bonstetten.

James Brown, *le petit bon homme* with the warm heart, was kinder and less ambitious. He wrote thoughtful letters to every one, and particularly to the three friends in exile, to Horace Walpole, Nicholls, and Bonstetten. Walpole was struck cold in the midst of his frivolities, as if he had suffered in his own person a touch of paralysis; in his letters he seems to whimper and shiver, as much with apprehension as with sorrow. Norton Nicholls gave a cry of grief, and very characteristically wrote instantly to his mother lest she, knowing his love for Gray, should fear that the shock would make him ill. From this exquisite letter we must cite some lines:—

I only write now lest you should be apprehensive on my

account since the death of my dear friend. Yesterday's post brought me the fatal news, in a letter from Mr. Brown, that Mr. Gray (all that was most dear to me in this world except yourself) died in the night about eleven o'clock, between the 30th and 31st of July. . . . You need not be alarmed for me, I am well, and not subject to emotions violent enough to endanger my health, and besides with good kind people who pity me and can feel themselves. Afflicted you may be sure I am! You who know I considered Mr. Gray as a second parent, that I thought only of him, built all my happiness on him, talked of him for ever, wished him with me whenever I partook of any pleasure, and flew to him for refuge whenever I felt any uneasiness; to whom now shall I talk of all I have seen here? Who will teach me to read, to think, to feel? I protest to you, that whatever I did or thought had a reference to him,—“ Mr. Gray will be pleased with this when I tell him. I must ask Mr. Gray what he thinks of such a person or thing. He would like such a person or dislike such another.” If I met with any chagrins, I comforted myself that I had a treasure at home; if all the world had despised and hated me, I should have thought myself perfectly recompensed in his friendship. Now remains only one loss more; if I lose *you*, I am left alone in the world. At present I feel I have lost half of myself. Let me hear that you are well.

Thirty-four years afterwards the hand which penned these unaffected lines wrote down those reminiscences, alas! too brief, which constitute the most valuable impressions of Gray that we possess. It is impossible not to regret that this sincere and tender friend did not undertake that labour of biography which fell into more skilled, but coarser hands than his. Yet it is no little matter to possess this first outflow of grief and affection. It assures us that, with all his melancholy and self-torture, the great spirit of Gray was not without its lively consolations, and that he gained of Heaven

the boon for which he had prayed, a friend of friends. Nicholls, Bonstetten, Robinson, Wharton, Stonehewer, and Brown were undistinguished names of unheroic men who are interesting to posterity only because, with that unselfish care which only a great character and sweetness of soul have power to rouse, they loved, honoured, cherished this silent and melancholy anchorite. Dearer friends, better and more devoted companions through a slow and unexhilarating career, no man famous in literature has possessed, and we feel that not to recognize this magnetic power of attracting good souls around him would be to lose sight of Gray's peculiar and signal charm. It is true that, like the moon, he was "dark to them, and silent;" that he received, and lacked the power to give; they do not seem to have required from him the impossible, they accepted his sympathy, and rejoiced in his inexpressive affection; and when he was taken from them, they regarded his memory as fanatics regard the sayings and doings of the founder of their faith. Gray "never spoke out," Brown said; he lived, more even than the rest of us, in an involuntary isolation, a pathetic type of the solitude of the soul.

Yes! in the sea of life enisled,
With echoing straits between us thrown,
Dotting the shoreless watery wild,
We mortal myriads live *alone*.
The islands feel the enclasping flow,
And then their endless bounds they know.

CHAPTER X.

POSTHUMOUS.

THE earliest tribute to the mind and character of Gray was published in 1772 in the March number of a rather dingy periodical, issued under Dr. Johnson's protection, and entitled the *London Magazine*. This was written in the form of a letter to Boswell by a man who had little sympathy with Gray as a poet or as a wit, but was well fitted to comprehend him as a scholar, the Reverend William J. Temple, vicar of St. Gluvias. This gentleman, who had been a fellow of Trinity Hall during Gray's residence in Cambridge, and who is frequently mentioned in the poet's later letters, was almost the only existing link between the circles ruled respectively by Gray and Samuel Johnson, Cole being perhaps the one other person known to both these mutually repellent individuals. Temple's contribution to the *London Magazine* is styled "A Sketch of the Character of the Celebrated Poet Mr. Gray," and is ushered in by the editor with some perfunctory compliments to the poems. But Temple's own remarks are very valuable, and may be reprinted here, especially as the careful Mitford and every succeeding writer seem to have been content to quote them from Johnson's inaccurate transcript:—

Perhaps Mr. Gray was the most learned man in Europe: he was equally acquainted with the elegant and profound parts of Science, and not superficially, but thoroughly. He knew every

branch of history, both natural and civil; had read all the original historians of England, France, and Italy; and was a great antiquarian. Criticism, metaphysics, morals, politics, made a principal part of his plan of study. Voyages and travels of all sorts were his favourite amusement: and he had a fine taste in painting, prints, architecture, and gardening. With such a fund of knowledge, his conversation must have been equally instructing and entertaining. But he was also a good man, a well-bred man, a man of virtue and humanity. There is no character without some speck, some imperfection; and I think the greatest defect in his, was an affectation in delicacy or rather effeminacy, and a visible fastidiousness or contempt and disdain of his inferiors in science. He also had in some degree that weakness which disgusted Voltaire so much in Mr. Congreve. Though he seemed to value others chiefly according to the progress they had made in knowledge, yet he could not bear to be considered himself merely as a man of letters: and though without birth, or fortune, or station, his desire was to be looked upon as a private gentleman, who read for his amusement."

Against the charge of priggishness which seems to be contained in these last lines, we may place Norton Nicholls' anecdote, that having in the early part of their acquaintance remarked that some person was "a clever man," he was cut short by Gray, who said, "Tell me if he is good for anything." Another saying of his, that genius and the highest acquirements of science were as nothing compared with "that exercise of right reason which Plato called virtue," is equally distinct as evidence that he did not place knowledge above conduct. But the earlier part of Temple's article, which regards Gray's learning and acquisitions of every sort, is of great value. Another of the poet's contemporaries, Robert Potter, the translator of *Æschylus*, and one of the foremost scholars of the time, followed with a similar statement. "Mr. Gray

was perhaps the most learned man of the age, but his mind never contracted the rust of pedantry. He had too good an understanding to neglect that urbanity which renders society pleasing: his conversation was instructing, elegant, and agreeable. Superior knowledge, an exquisite taste in the fine arts, and, above all, purity of morals, and an unaffected reverence for religion, made this excellent person an ornament to society, and an honour to human nature."

Mason lost no time in giving out that he was collecting materials for a Life of Gray. His first literary act was to print for private circulation in 1772 the opening book of his didactic poem *The English Garden*, which he had written as early as 1767, but which Gray had never allowed him to print, speaking freely of it as being nonsense. But Mason loved the children of his brain, and could not support the idea that one of them should be withheld from the world. With great naïveté, he attempted to argue the matter with the shade of his great friend in a third book which he added in 1772.

Clos'd is that curious ear, by Death's cold hand,
That mark'd each error of my careless strain
With kind severity; to whom my Muse
Still lov'd to whisper what she meant to sing
In louder accent; to whose taste supreme
She first and last appealed,

but still the departed friend may be invoked by the Muse,

and still, by Fancy sooth'd,
Fain would she hope her GRAY attends the call.

Mason then refers, in the flat, particular manner native to eighteenth century elegy, to the urn and bust and sculptured lyre which he had placed to the memory of Gray in

a rustic alcove in the garden at Aston, and then he approaches the awkward circumstance that Gray considered *The English Garden* trash :—

Oft, "smiling as in scorn," oft would he cry,
 "Why waste thy numbers on a trivial art
 That ill can mimic even the humblest charms
 Of all-majestic Nature?" at the word
 His eye would glisten, and his accents glow
 With all the Poet's frenzy; "Sovereign Queen!
 Behold, and tremble, while thou viewest her State
 Thron'd on the heights of Skiddaw: trace her march
 Amid the purple crags of Borrowdale.
 Will thy boldest song
 E'er brace the sinews of enervate art
 To such dread daring? Will it e'en direct
 Her hand to emulate those softer charms
 That deck the banks of Dove, or call to birth
 The bare romantic crags," &c.

It seems highly probable that, stripped of the charms of blank verse, this is precisely what Gray was constantly saying to Mason, who greatly preferred artificial cascades and myrtle grotts to all the mountains in Christendom. On the fly-leaf of this private edition of *The English Garden* in 1772 appeared the first general announcement of the coming biography.

The work progressed very slowly. From the family of West, who had now been dead thirty years, Mason was fortunate enough to secure a number of valuable letters, but it was difficult to fill up the hiatus between the close of this correspondence and the beginning of Mason's personal acquaintance with Gray. Wharton and Horace Walpole came very kindly to his aid, and he was able to collect a considerable amount of material. It is distressing to think of the mass of papers, letters, verses,

and other documents which Mason possessed, and of the comparatively small use which he made of them. He conceived the happy notion, which does not seem to have been thought of by any previous writer, of allowing Gray to tell his own story by means of his letters ; but he vitiated the evidence so put before the world by tampering grossly with the correspondence. He confessed to Norton Nicholls, who was angry at this, that "much liberty was taken in transposing parts of the letters," but he did not go on to mention that he allowed himself to interpolate and erase passages, to conceal proper names, to mutilate the original MSS., and to alter dates and opinions. He was very anxious that what he called his "fidelity" should not "be impeached" to the public and the critics, but declared that he had only acted for the honour of Gray himself. It is probable that in his foolish heart Mason really did consider that he was respecting Gray in thus brushing his clothes and washing his hands for him before allowing the world to see him. He thought that a ruffled wig or a disordered shoe-tie would destroy his hero's credit with the judicious, and accordingly he removed all that was silly and natural from the letters. This determination to improve Gray has marred, also, the slender thread of biography by which the letters are linked together, yet to a less degree than might be supposed, and the student finds himself constantly returning to Mason's meagre and slipshod narrative for some fact which has been less exactly stated by the far more careful and critical Mitford. Mason had too much literary ability, and had known Gray too intimately and too long, to make his book other than valuable. It is faulty and unfinished, but it is a sketch from the life. It appeared, in two quarto volumes, in

June 1775 and was received with great warmth by the critics, the public, and all but the intimate friends of Gray. Mason often reprinted this book, which continued to be a sort of classic until Mitford commenced his investigations.

It has generally been acknowledged that Johnson's Life of Gray is the worst section in his delightful series. It formed the last chapter but one in the fourth volume of the *Lives of the Poets*, and was written when its author was tired of his task, and longing to be at rest again. It is barren and meagre of fact to the last degree; Cole, the antiquary, gave into Johnson's charge a collection of anecdotes and sayings of Gray which he had formed in connexion with the poet's Cambridge friends, especially Tyson and Sparrow, but the lexicographer was disinclined to make any use of them, and they were dispersed and lost. We have already seen that these two great men, the leading men of letters of their age in England, were radically wanting in sympathy. Gray disliked Johnson personally, apparently preserving the memory of some chance meeting in which the Sage had been painfully self-asserting and oppressive; he was himself a lover of limpid and easy prose, and a master of the lighter parts of writing, and therefore condemned the style of Dr. Johnson hastily, as being wholly turgid and vicious. Yet he respected his character, and has recorded the fact that Johnson often went out in the streets of London with his pockets full of silver, and had given it all away before he returned home.

Johnson's portrait of Gray is somewhat more judicial than this, but just as unsympathetic. Yet he made one remark, after reading a few of Gray's letters, which seems to me to surpass in acumen all the generalities of Mason, namely that though Gray was fastidious and hard to please, he was a

man likely to love much where he loved at all. But for Gray's poems Johnson had little but bewilderment. If they had not received the warm sanction of critics like Warburton and Hurd, and the admiration of such friends of his own as Boswell and Garrick, it seems likely that Johnson would not have acknowledged in them any merit whatever. Where he approves of them, no praise could be fainter; where he objects, he is even more trenchant and contemptuous than usual. The *Elegy in a Country Churchyard*, and the *Ode on Adversity* are the only pieces in the whole repertory of Gray to which he allows the tempered eulogy that he is not willing to withhold from Mallet or Shenstone. We shall probably acquit the sturdy critic of any unfairness, even involuntary, when we perceive that for the poetry of Collins, who was his friend and the object of his benefactions, he has even less toleration than for the poetry of Gray.

When we examine Johnson's strictures more exactly still, we find that the inconsistency which usually accompanied the expression of his literary opinions does not forsake him here. Even when Johnson is on safe ground, as when he is weighing in a very careful balance the *Epitaphs* of Pope, he is never a sure critic; he brings his excellent common sense to bear on the subject in hand, but is always in too great haste to be closing not to omit some essential observation. But when discussing poetry so romantic in its nature as that of Gray, he deals blows even more at random than usual. The *Ode on Adversity* meets with his warmest approbation, and he suggests no objection to its allegorical machinery, to much of which no little exception might now be taken. But the *Eton Ode*, with strange want of caution, he declaims against in detail, blaming at one time what posterity

is now content to admire, and at the other what his own practice in verse might have amply justified. "The *Prospect of Eton College* suggests nothing to Gray, which every beholder does not equally think and feel," that is to say, which every susceptible and cultivated beholder does not feel in a certain vein of reflection; but this, so far from being a fault, is the touch of nature which makes the poem universally interesting. "His supplication to Father Thames, to tell him who drives the hoop or tosses the ball, is useless and puerile. Father Thames has no better means of knowing than himself." In this case, Johnson was instantly reminded that Father Nile had been called upon for information exactly analogous in the pages of *Rasselas*. "His epithet *buxom health* is not elegant," but to us it seems appropriate, which is better. Finally Johnson finds that "redolent of joy and youth" is an expression removed beyond apprehension, and is an imitation of a phrase of Dryden's misunderstood; but here Gray proves himself the better scholar. It may be conjectured that he found this word *redolent*, of which he was particularly fond, among the old Scots poets of the sixteenth century, whom he was the first to unearth. Dunbar and Scot love to talk of the "redolent rose."

The phrases above quoted constitute Johnson's entire criticism of the *Eton Ode*, and it is of a kind, which however vigorously expressed, would not now-a-days be considered competent before the least accredited of tribunals. The examination of the two Pindaric odes is conducted on more conscientious but not more sympathetic principles. To the experiments in metre, to the verbal and quantitative felicities, Johnson is absolutely deaf. He does not entirely deny merit to the poems, but he contrives, most ingeniously, to hesitate contempt. "My process," he says, "has now brought me to the wonderful Wonder of Wonders, the two Sister

Odes; by which, though either vulgar ignorance or common sense at first universally rejected them, many have been since persuaded to think themselves delighted. I am one of those that are willing to be pleased, and therefore would gladly find the meaning of the first stanza of the *Progress of Poetry*." Johnson, it is obvious enough, is on the side of "common sense." The difficulty which he was pleased to find in the opening stanza of the ode is one which he would have been the first to denounce as whimsical and paltry if brought forward by some other critic. Gray describes the formation of poetry under the symbol of a widening river, calm and broad in its pastoral moments, loud, riotous and resonant when swollen by passion or anger. Johnson, to whom the language of Greek poetry and the temper of Greek thought were uncongenial, refused to grasp this direct imagery, and said that if the poet was speaking of music, the expression "rolling down the steep amain" was nonsense, and if of water, nothing to the point. So good a scholar should have known, and any biographer should have noticed that Gray had pointed out, that, as usual in Pindar, whom he is here closely paraphrasing, the subject and simile are united. Johnson was careless enough to blame Gray for inventing the compound adjective *velvet-green*, although Pope and Young, poets after Johnson's own heart, had previously used it. The rest of his criticism is equally faulty, and from the same causes,—haste, and want of sympathy.

Johnson's attack did nothing at first to injure Gray's position as a poet. Yet there can be no doubt that in the process of time, the great popularity of the *Lives of the Poets*, and the oblivion into which Mason's life has fallen, have done something sensibly to injure Gray with the unthinking. Even in point of history the life of Gray is culpably full of errors, and might as well have

been written if Mason's laborious work had never been published. There is, however, one point on which Johnson did early justice to Gray, and that is in commending the picturesque grace of his descriptions of the country. Against the condemnation of Johnson, there were placed, almost instantly, the enthusiastic praises of Adam Smith, Gibbon, Hume, Mackintosh, and others of no less authority, who were unanimous in ranking his poetry only just below that of Shakespeare and Milton. This view continued until the splendours of the neo-romantic school, especially the reputations of Wordsworth and Byron, reduced the luminary and deprived it of its excess of light. The Lake School, particularly Coleridge, professed that Gray had been unfairly over-rated, and it was rather Byron and Shelley who sustained his fame, as in some directions they continued his tradition.

It would be to leave this little memoir imperfect if we did not follow the destinies of that group of intimate friends who survived the poet, and whose names are indissolubly connected with his. The one who died first was Lord Strathmore, who passed away, prematurely, in 1776. James Brown continued to hold the mastership of Pembroke, and to enjoy the reputation of a gentle and good-natured old man until 1784, when he followed his friend to the grave. Young men of letters, such as Sir Egerton Brydges, considered it a privilege to be asked to the Master's Lodge, and to take tea with the man in whose arms Gray breathed his last, although Brown had no great power of reminiscence, and had not much to tell such eager questioners. Of himself it was told that his ways were so extremely punctilious as to amuse Gray, himself a very regular man, and that once, when the friends were going to start together at a certain hour, and the time had just arrived, Brown rose and began to walk to and fro,

whereupon Gray exclaimed, "Look at Brown, he is going to strike!" Dr. Thomas Wharton (who must never be confounded with Thomas Warton, the poet-laureate) continued to live at his house at Old Park, Durham, where Gray had so often spent delightful weeks. He died in 1794 at a great age, and left his ample correspondence with Gray to his second son, a man of some literary pretensions, of whom Sir Egerton Brydges has given an interesting account. Mason and Walpole, whose careers are too well known to be dwelt upon here, survived their celebrated friend by more than a quarter of a century. Horace Walpole died on March 2, and Mason on April 4, 1797.

At the close of the century several of Gray's early friends still survived. The Rev. William Robinson, having reached the age of seventy-six, died in December 1803. On his tomb in the church of Monk's Horton, in Kent, it was stated that he was "especially intimate with the poet Gray," with whom he probably became acquainted through the accident that his mother, after his father's death, made Dr. Conyers Middleton her second husband. His sister was the Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu who wrote the *Essay on Shakespeare* and who patronized Dr. Johnson. The kind and faithful Stonehewer died at a very advanced age in 1809, bequeathing to Pembroke Hall those commonplace-books of Gray's from which Mathias reaped his bulky volumes, and yet left much for me to glean. Norton Nicholls died rector of Lound and Bradwell in Suffolk, on the 22nd of November, in the same year, 1809, having fortunately placed on paper, four years before, his exquisite reminiscences of Gray. He also bears on his memorial tablet, in Richmond Church, his claim to the regard of posterity: "He was the friend of the illustrious Gray."

The most remarkable, certainly the most original,

of Gray's friends, was also the most long-lived. Charles Victor de Bonstetten had but just begun his busy and eccentric career when he crossed the orbit of Gray. He lived not merely to converse with Byron but to survive him, and to see a new age of literature inaugurated. He was a copious writer, and his works enjoyed a certain vogue. His well-known description of Gray occurs in a book of studies published in 1831, the year before he died, *Les Souvenirs du Chevalier de Bonstetten*. In the most chatty of his books, *L'Homme du Midi et l'homme du Nord*, he says that he found in England that friendship of the most intimate kind could subsist between persons who were satisfied to remain absolutely silent in one another's presence ; there may be a touch of the reserve of Gray in this vague allusion.

In Bonstetten the romantic seed which Gray may be supposed to have sown, burst into extravagant blossom. His conduct in private life seems, from what can be gathered, to have been founded on a perusal of *La Nouvelle Heloise*, and though he was a pleasant little fat man, with rosy cheeks, his conduct was hardly up to the standard which Gray would have approved of. Bonstetten may perhaps be described as a smaller Benjamin Constant ; like him, he was Swiss by birth, first roused to intellectual interest in England, and finally sentimentalized in Germany ; but he was not quite capable of writing *Adolphe*. Bonstetten followed Gray in studying the Scandinavian tongues ; he acquainted himself with Icelandic, and wrote copiously, though not very wisely, on the Eddas. He brought out a German edition of his works at Copenhagen, where he spent some time, and whither he pursued his eccentric friend Matthison. Bonstetten died at Genoa in February, 1832, at the age of eighty-seven. The last survivor among people whom

Gray knew was probably the Earl of Burlington, "little brother George," who died in 1834. Perhaps the last person who was certainly in Gray's presence was Sir Samuel Egerton Brydges, who was present, at the age of three, at a wedding at which Gray assisted, and who died in 1837.

Gray was rather short in stature, of graceful build in early life, but too plump in later years. He walked in a wavering and gingerly manner, the result probably of weakness. Besides the portraits already described in the body of this memoir, there is a painting at Pembroke Hall by Benjamin Wilson, F.R.S., a versatile artist whose work was at one time considered equal to that of Hogarth. This portrait is in profile; it was evidently painted towards the close of the poet's life; the cheeks are puffed, and the lips have fallen inwards through lack of teeth. Gray is also stated to have sat to one of the Vanderguchts, but this portrait seems to have disappeared. In 1778 Mason commissioned the famous sculptor John Bacon, who was just then executing various works in Westminster Abbey, to carve the medallion now existing in Poet's Corner; as Bacon had never seen Gray, Mason lent him a profile drawing by himself, the original of which, a hideous little work, is now preserved at Pembroke. A bust of Gray, by Behnes, founded on the full-face portrait by Eckhardt, stands with those of other famous scholars, in Upper School at Eton.

In 1776, according to a College Order which Mr. J. W. Clark has kindly copied for me, "James Brown, Master, and William Mason, Fellow, each gave fifty pounds to establish a building fund in memory of Thomas Gray the Poet, who had long resided in the College." The fund so started gradually accumulated until it amounted to a very large sum. Certain alterations were made, but nothing serious was attempted until, about

thirty years ago, Mr. Cory, a fellow of Emmanuel College, took down the Christopher Wren doorway to the hall, and attempted to harmonise the whole structure to Gothic. Still the Gray Building Fund was accumulating, and the college was becoming less and less able to accommodate its inmates. It was determined at last to carry out the scheme proposed nearly a century before by Brown and Mason. In March 1870, the work was put into the hands of Mr. Alfred Waterhouse. He was at work on the college until 1879, and in his hands if it is no longer picturesque it is thoroughly comfortable and habitable.

In all this vast expenditure of money, not one penny was spent, until quite lately, in commemoration of the man in whose name it was collected. At Peterhouse, when the College Hall was restored in 1870, a stained glass window, drawn by Mr. F. Madox Brown and executed by Mr. William Morris, was presented by Mr. A. H. Hunt. At Pembroke a still more fitting memorial was erected on the 26th of May 1885, when a marble bust by Mr. Hamo Thornycroft, A.R.A., was unveiled by Lord Houghton in the College Hall in the presence of a very distinguished audience. Mr. Lowell and Sir Frederick Leighton, among others, gave eloquent testimony on that occasion to the lasting esteem in which the memory of Gray is held on both sides of the Atlantic.

THE END.

APPENDIX

It was not known until the Dillon MSS. passed through my hands in 1884 that in August 1764, about a month after the surgical operation which is described on p. 165, Gray went to Netherby, on the Scotch border, to visit the Rev. Mr. Graham, the horticulturist, and from his house set out on a tour through Scotland. His route took him by Annan and Dumfries to the Falls of the Clyde and Lanark. At Glasgow he visited Foulis, the publisher, from whom he afterwards received many courtesies. He admired Foulis' academy of painting and sculpture, and lamented that the Cathedral of Glasgow had fallen so much out of repair. He passed on to Loch Lomond, sailed on the loch, and returned to Glasgow by Dumbarton. At Stirling he enjoyed the view from the Castle, and went on by Falkirk and the coast to Edinburgh. He took excursions to Hawthornden and Roslin, and thence to Melrose. He was next at Kelso, Tweedmouth, and Norham Castle. He made an excursion at low tide to Holy Island, and the journal closes at Bamborough Castle, from which place he went, no doubt, to his customary haunt, Dr. Wharton's house at Old Park, in the county of Durham. This was Gray's first visit to Scotland.



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